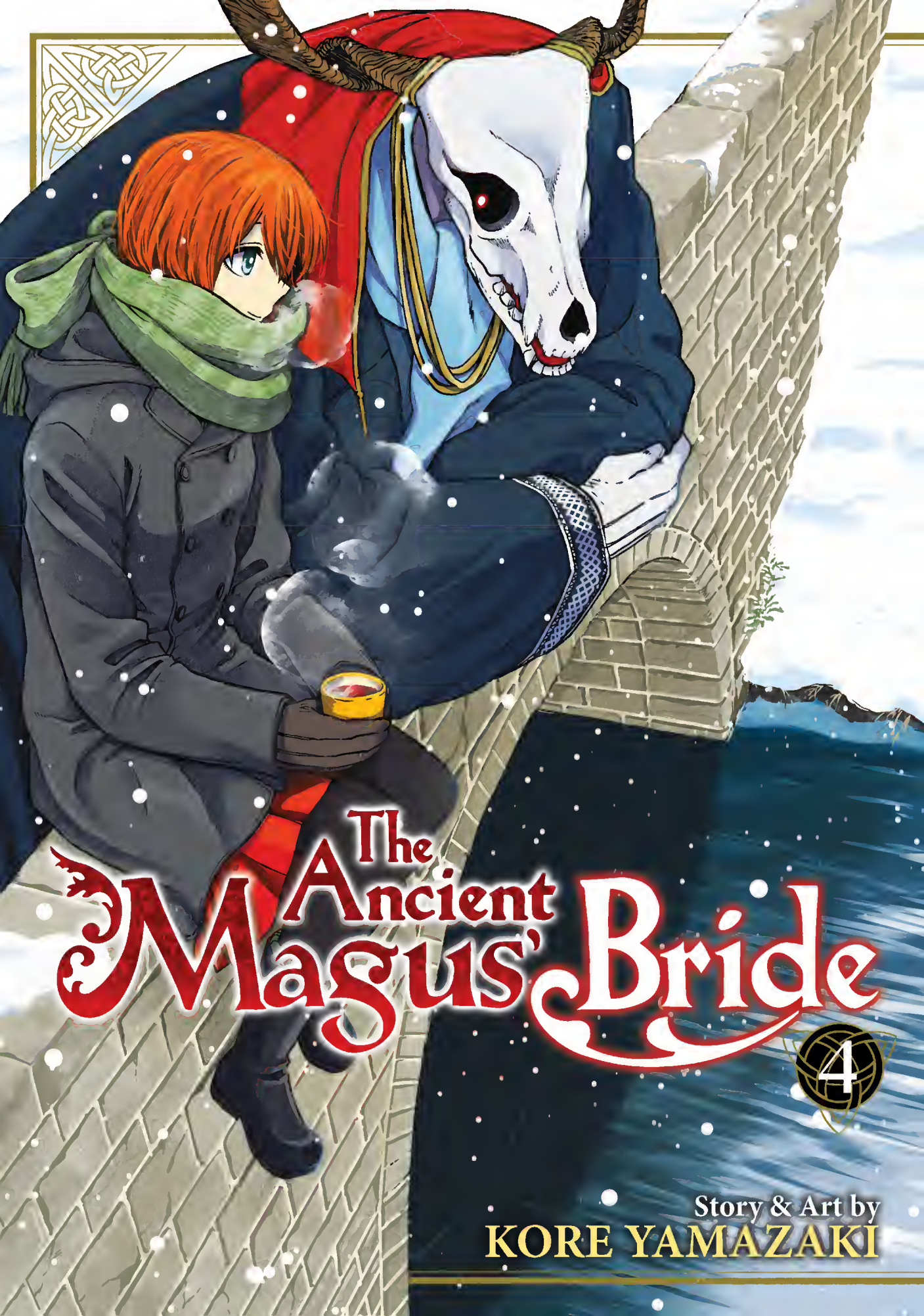
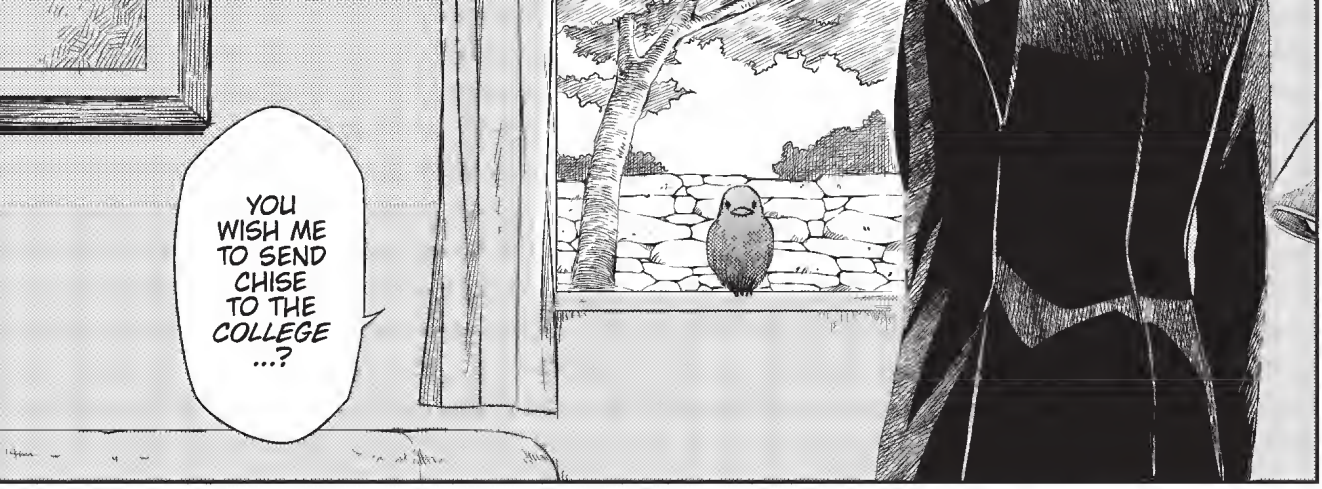
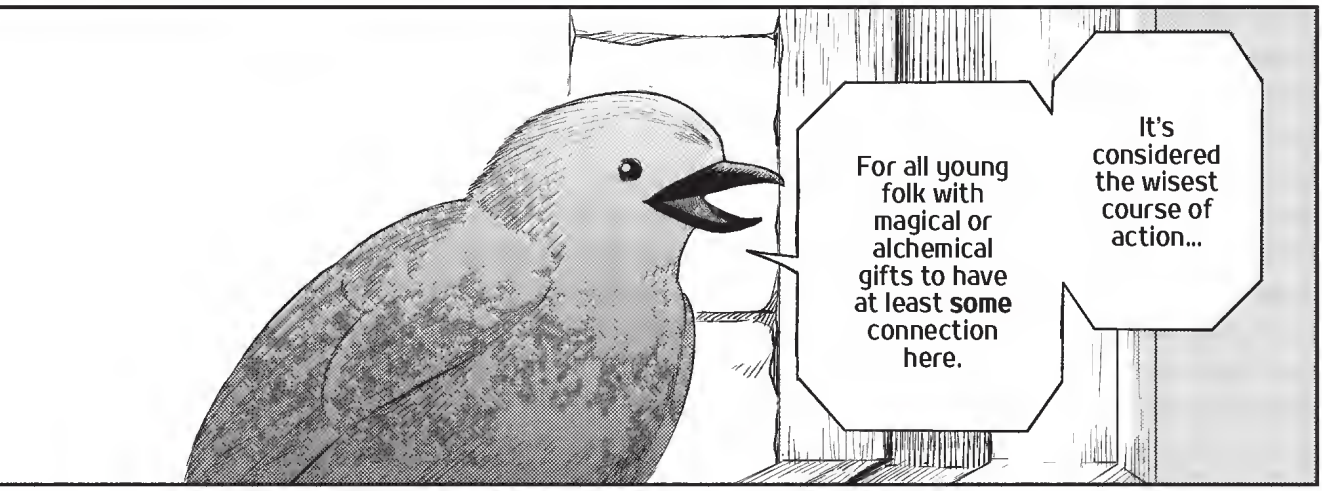
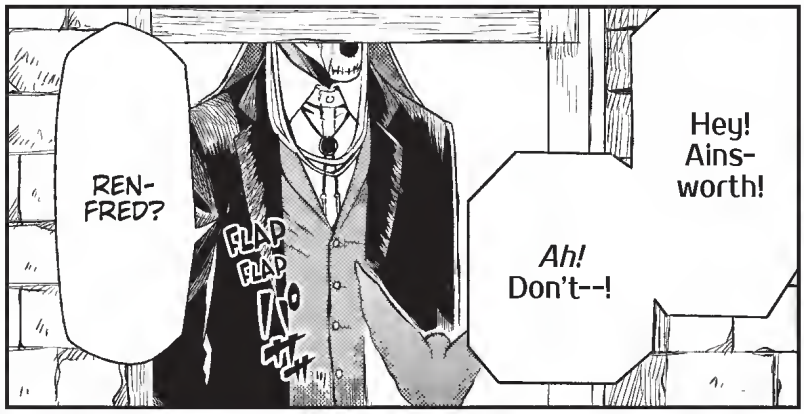

The Ancient Magus' Bride
4
Story & Art by
KORE YAMAZAKI


The Ancient Magus' Bride




YOU WISH ME TO SEND CHISE TO THE COLLEGE ...?


It's considered the wisest course of action...
For all young folk with magical or alchemical gifts to have at least **some** connection here.


REN-FRED?
FLAP FLAP
Hey! Ains-worth!
Ah! Don't--!


I don't know where you heard this "rumor"...
But what my puppy and I do is not your business. Begone.


LOOK, IF YOU KEEP HER STUCK THERE WITH YOU ALL THE TIME...
Sheesh!

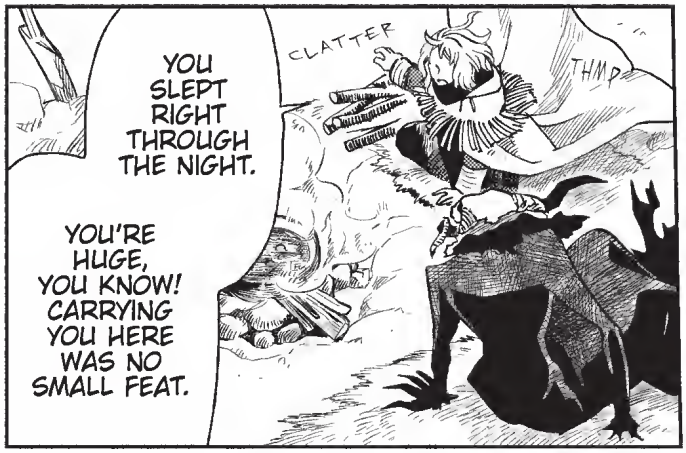


Chapter 16: Once bitten, twice shy.

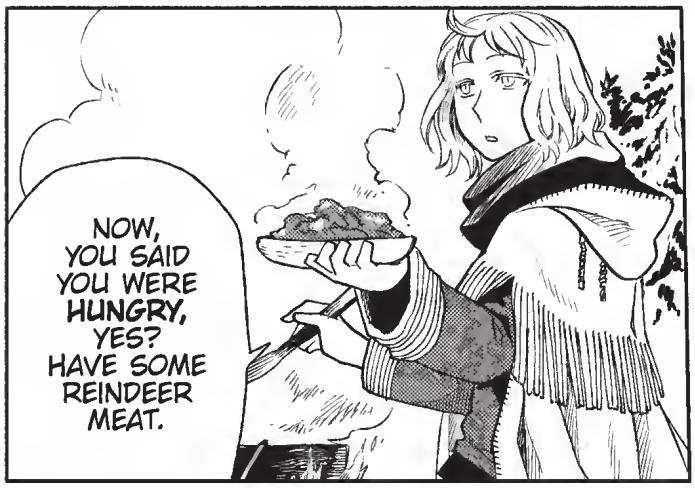


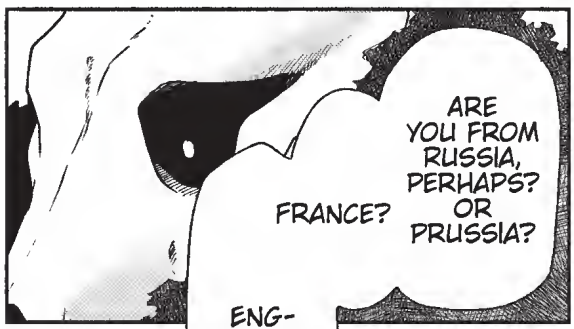

WHO MIGHT YOU BE...?
YES TOTTER
HUU...
HMM?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
HUH?
HUN... GRY...


FWMP
H-
HEY--!
FWIF
SKNCH
JOLT


CLATTER
THMP
YOU SLEPT RIGHT THROUGH THE NIGHT.
YOU'RE HUGE, YOU KNOW! CARRYING YOU HERE WAS NO SMALL FEAT.


AH, YOU'RE AWAKE.


NOW, YOU SAID YOU WERE **HUNGRY,** YES? HAVE SOME REINDEER MEAT.

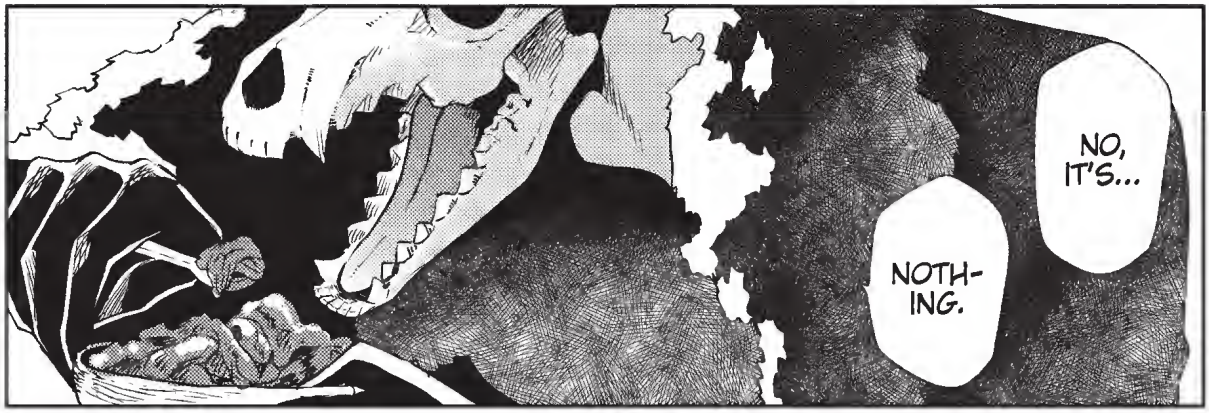

ARE YOU FROM RUSSIA, PERHAPS? OR PRUSSIA?
FRANCE?
ENG-LAND?


I DON'T KNOW.

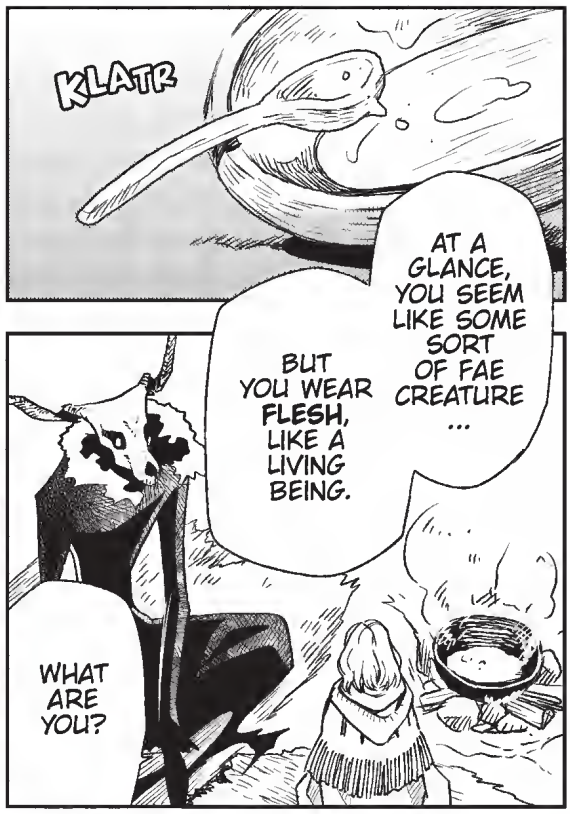

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
YOU DON'T SEEM PRECISELY **HUMAN.**

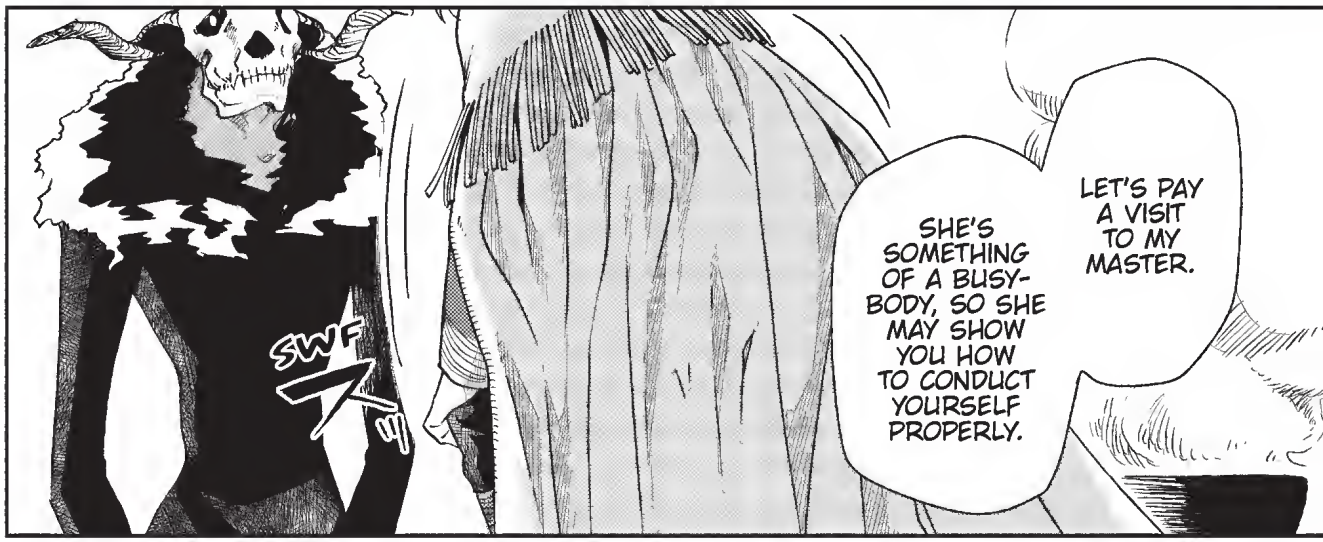

HMM? NOT GOING TO EAT?


I WAS WALKING.
I AWOKE IN THE FOREST.
AND WALKED.
AND WALKED ...
I WALKED ...
WHAT'S WRONG?
I AM TIRED.
NOW...


NO, IT'S...
NOTH-ING.

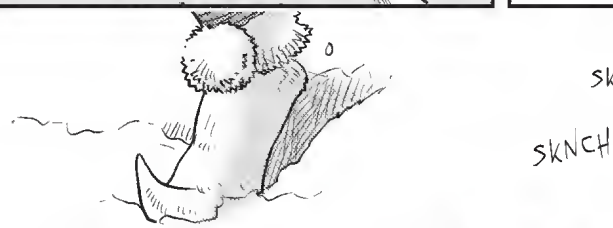

IS THERE SOME-WHERE YOU WISH TO GO?
I AM UNSURE. I KNOW ONLY THAT I WALKED AND WALKED, AVOIDING HUMANS. NOW I AM HERE.
HMM.

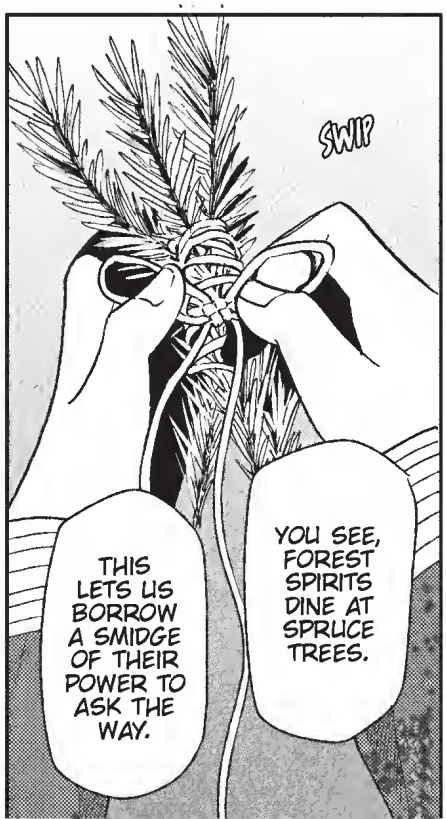

KLATR
AT A GLANCE, YOU SEEM LIKE SOME SORT OF FAE CREATURE ...
BUT YOU WEAR **FLESH**, LIKE A LIVING BEING.
WHAT ARE YOU?


SWF
SHE'S SOMETHING OF A BUSY-BODY, SO SHE MAY SHOW YOU HOW TO CONDUCT YOURSELF PROPERLY.
LET'S PAY A VISIT TO MY MASTER.

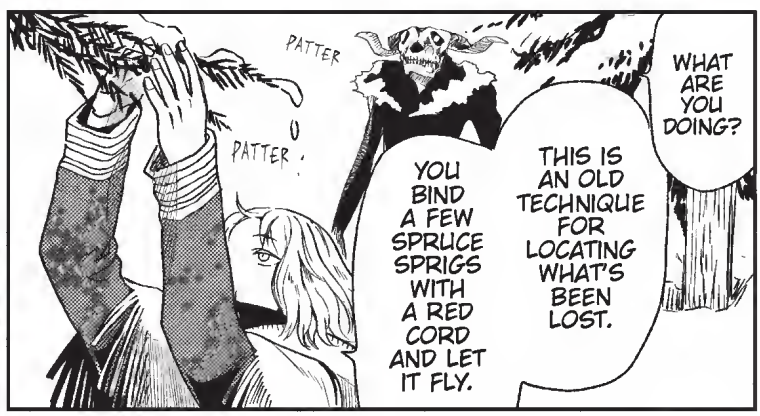

LINDEL.
I'M WHAT NORMAL FOLK CALL A MAGE.


IT CAN'T BE EASY TO SPEND YOUR DAYS WANDERING THE WASTES AIMLESSLY.
AND YOU ARE ...?

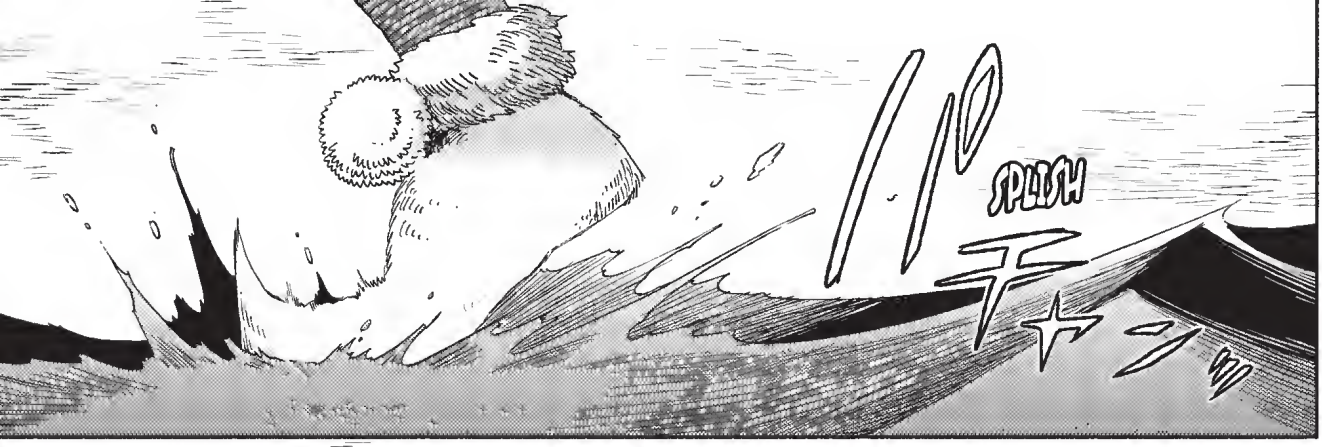

SKNCH
SKNCH

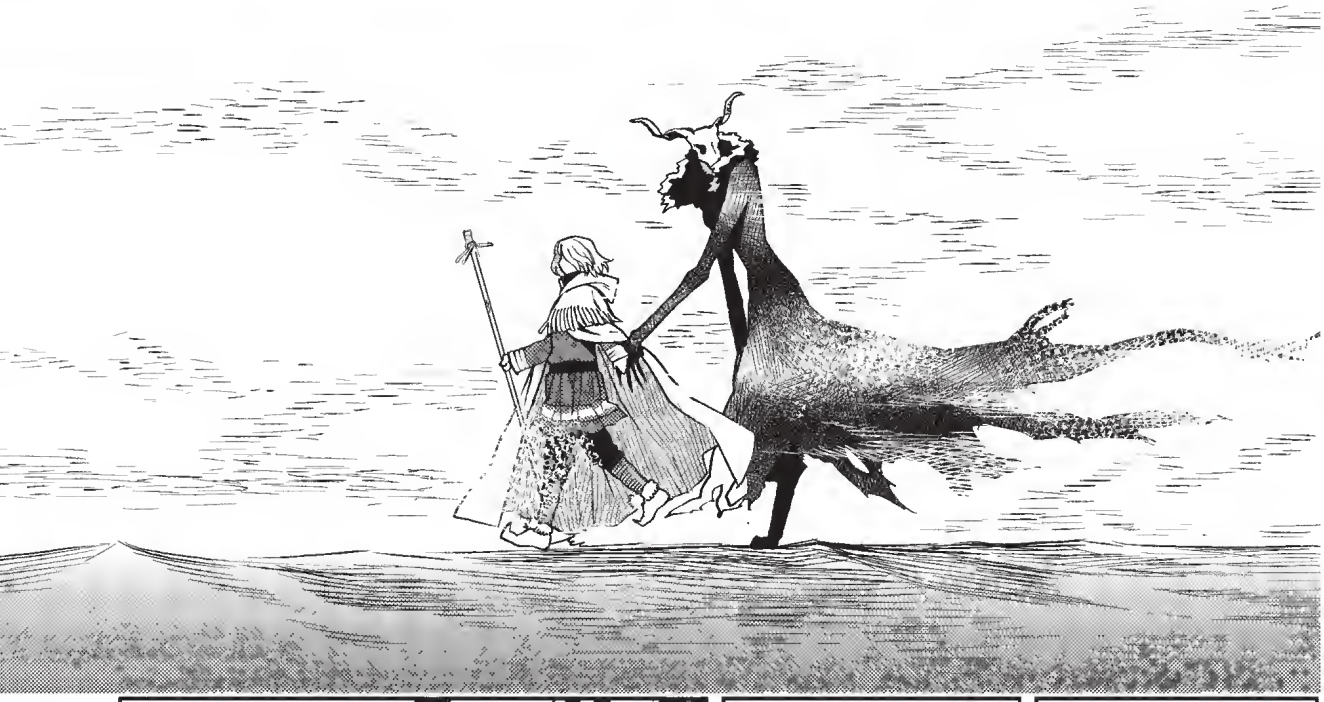

SWIP
YOU SEE, FOREST SPIRITS DINE AT SPRUCE TREES.
THIS LETS US BORROW A SMIDGE OF THEIR POWER TO ASK THE WAY.

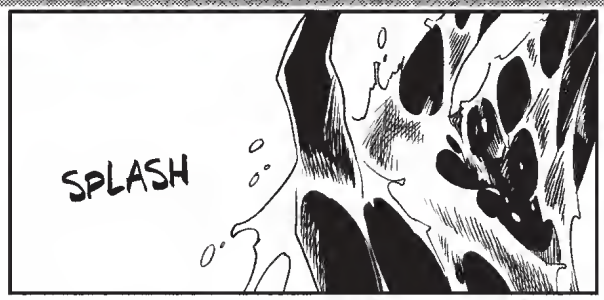


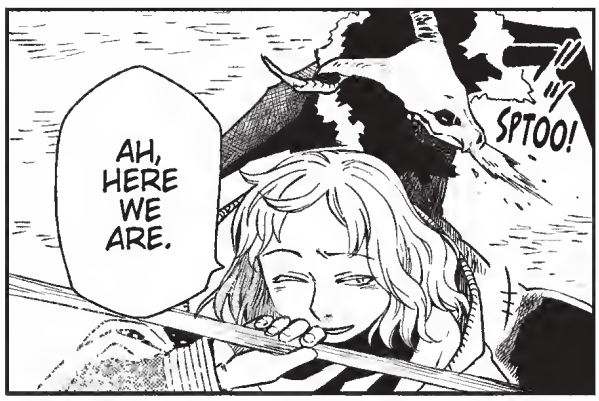

PATTER
PATTER
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
THIS IS AN OLD TECHNIQUE FOR LOCATING WHAT'S BEEN LOST.
YOU BIND A FEW SPRUCE SPRIGS WITH A RED CORD AND LET IT FLY.

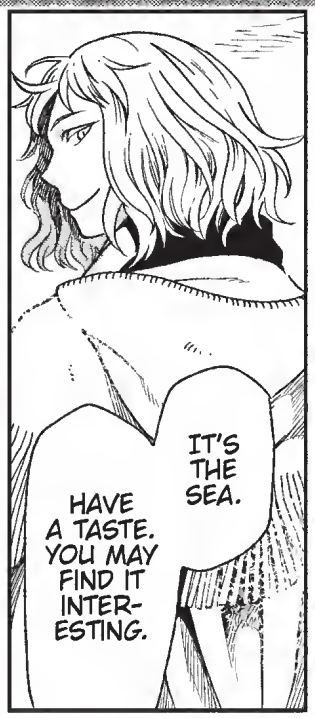

FLUTTER
HEAR ME, O GUIDE.
LEAD ME TO THE ABODE OF MY MASTER, WHICH LIES BEYOND THE MISTS.
TUG
THE MISTS WILL THICKEN. STAY CLOSE.
FWIIISH
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
TO SEE MY MASTER, AS I SAID.
SHE IS... INSCRUTABLE, LET'S SAY.
KREEE
KREK
FWIIII
AT THIS MOMENT, SHE MIGHT BE DWELLING RIGHT BESIDE US, OR AT THE FAR CORNERS OF THE EARTH.
SHE COULD BE LIVING A CENTURY IN THE PAST, OR EQUALLY FAR IN THE FUTURE.
.....?


SPLISH



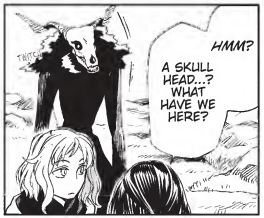

SPLASH

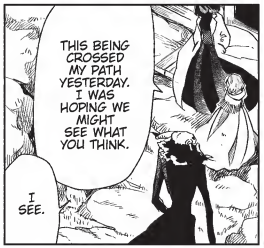

SPTOO!
AH, HERE WE ARE.


IT'S THE SEA.
HAVE A TASTE. YOU MAY FIND IT INTER-ESTING.

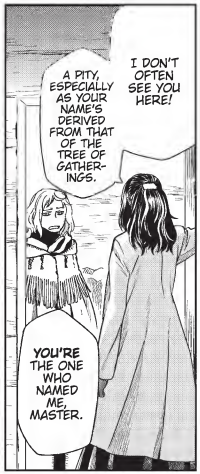

WATER ...?
SPLISH
SPLISH

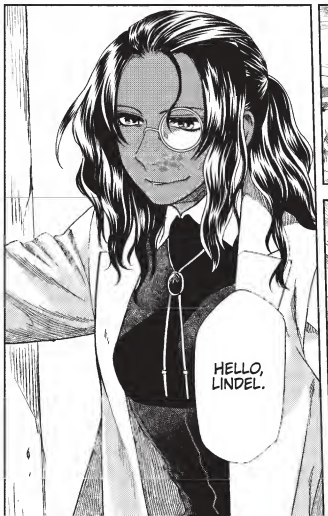


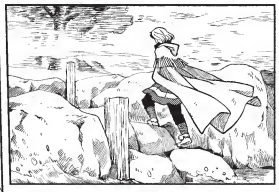

HMM?
A SKULL HEAD...? WHAT HAVE WE HERE?


THIS BEING CROSSED MY PATH YESTERDAY. I WAS HOPING WE MIGHT SEE WHAT YOU THINK.
I SEE.


IN HOPES IT'D INSPIRE YOU TO TRY HARDER TO INTERACT WITH--

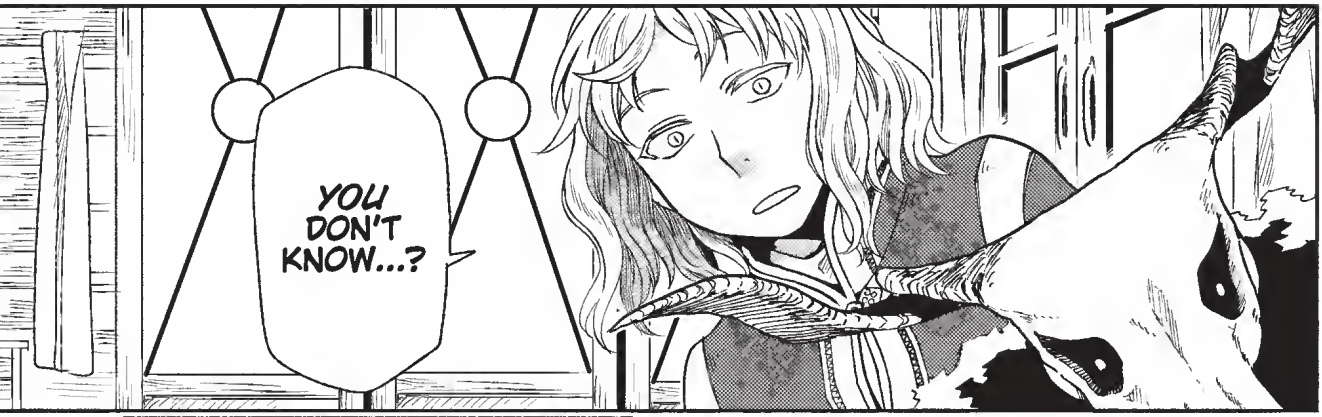

I DON'T OFTEN SEE YOU HERE!
A PITY, ESPECIALLY AS YOUR NAME'S DERIVED FROM THAT OF THE TREE OF GATHERINGS.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO NAMED ME, MASTER.

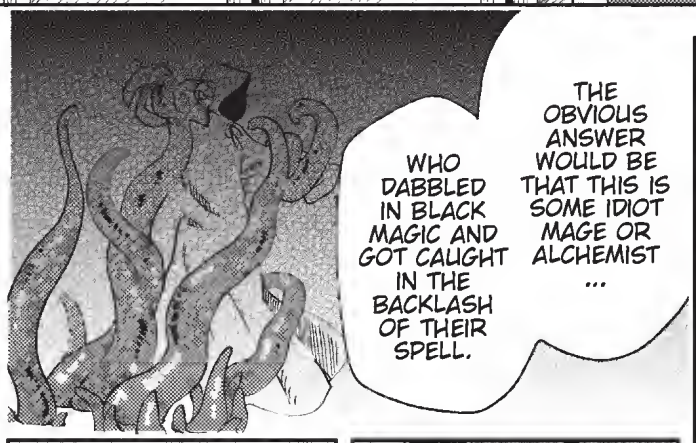

HELLO, LINDEL.

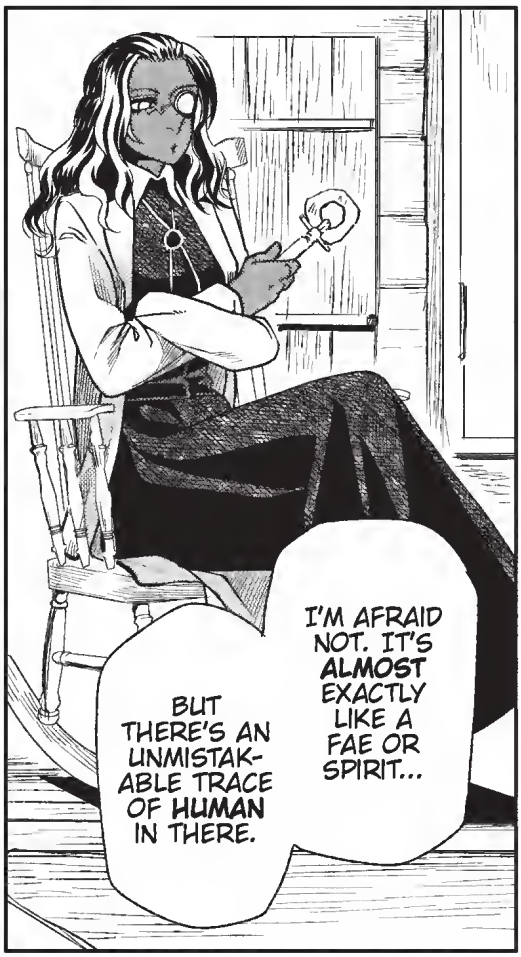


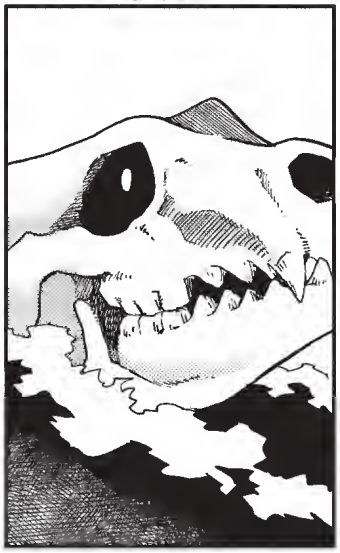

KREE
ARE YOU IN?
NOK NOK NOK
MAS-TER!
MASTER RAHAB?

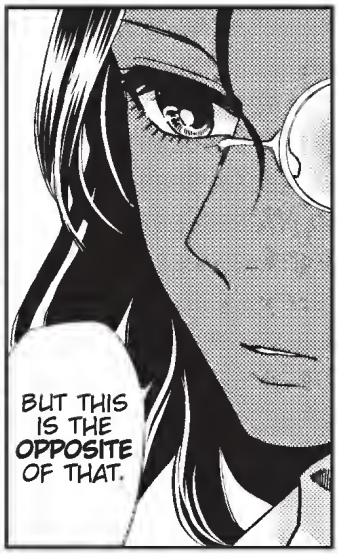

!
SHWOOP
LIKE THIS?
I'D LOVE TO INVITE YOU IN, BUT YOU'RE RATHER LARGE.
CAN YOU MAKE YOURSELF SMALLER?
SMALL-ER?
ABOUT OUR SIZE, LET'S SAY.
YOUR SIZE...
PLEASE, COME IN.
THAT'S PERFECT. WELL DONE.

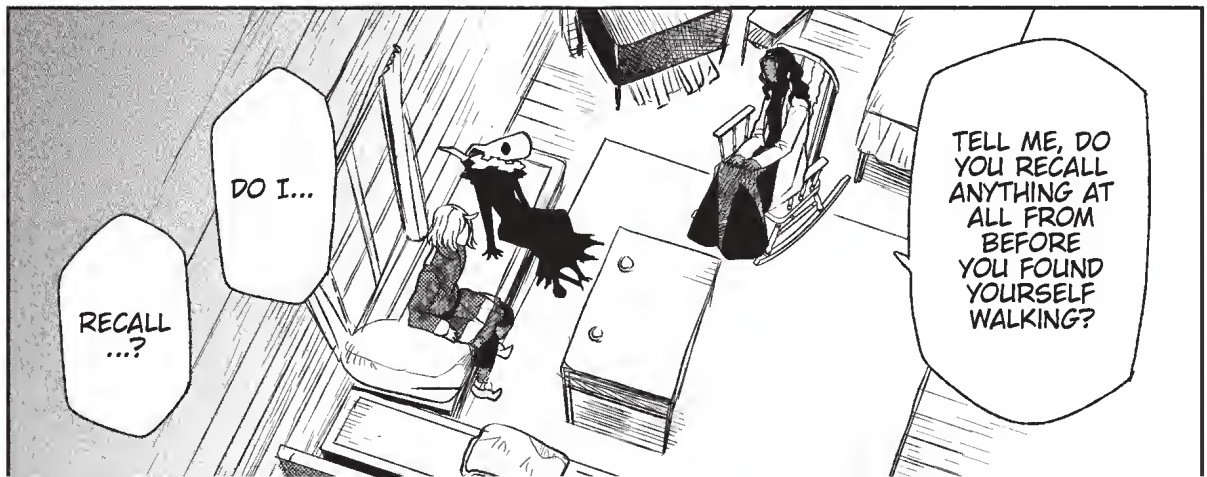

YOU DON'T KNOW...?


THE OBVIOUS ANSWER WOULD BE THAT THIS IS SOME IDIOT MAGE OR ALCHEMIST ...
WHO DABBLED IN BLACK MAGIC AND GOT CAUGHT IN THE BACKLASH OF THEIR SPELL.


I'M AFRAID NOT. IT'S ALMOST EXACTLY LIKE A FAE OR SPIRIT...
BUT THERE'S AN UNMISTAKABLE TRACE OF HUMAN IN THERE.




BUT THIS IS THE OPPOSITE OF THAT.


TELL ME, DO YOU RECALL ANYTHING AT ALL FROM BEFORE YOU FOUND YOURSELF WALKING?
DO I...
RECALL ...?



RED.

IF NOTHING COMES TO MIND, DON'T TRY TO PUSH YOURSELF.

.....

KREEE

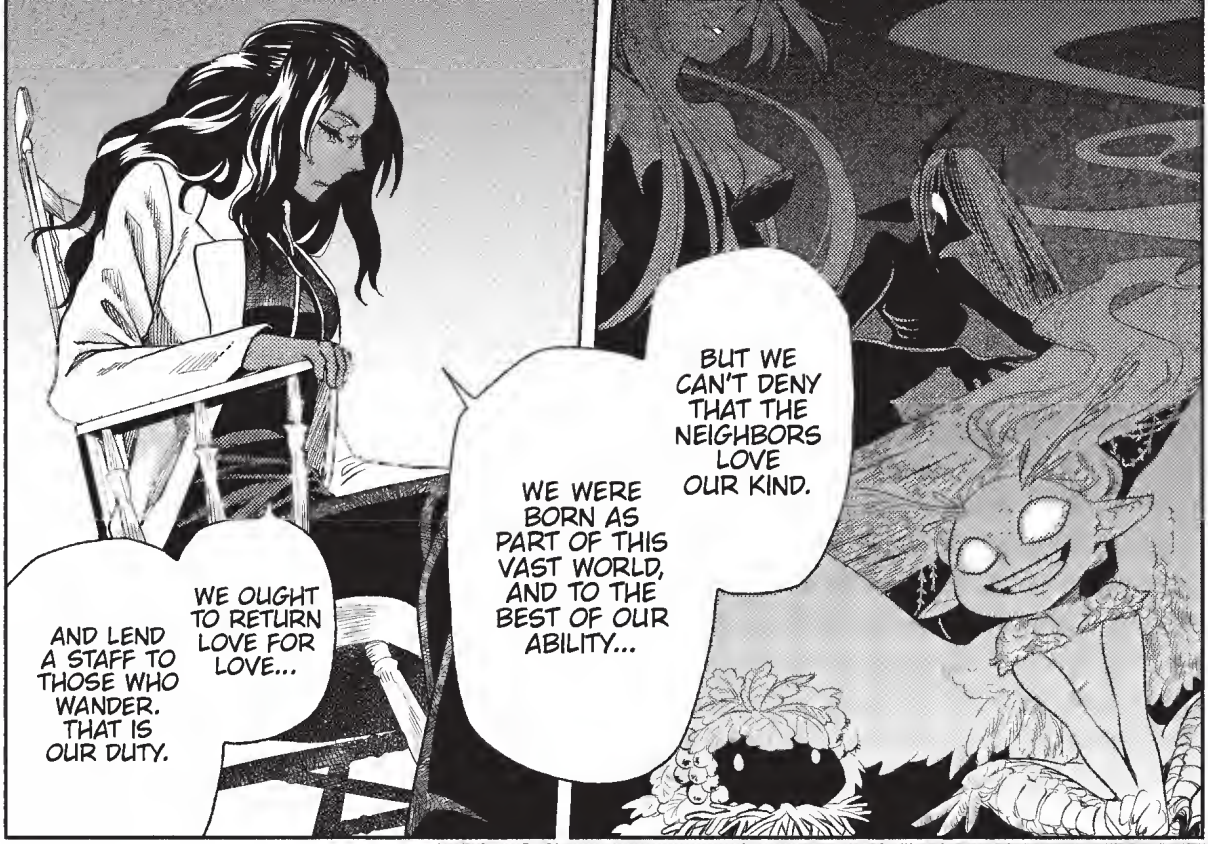
"RED"?

WHAT?!

TAKE OUR MYSTERY HERE UNDER YOUR WING FOR NOW, WILL YOU?

LIN-DEL.

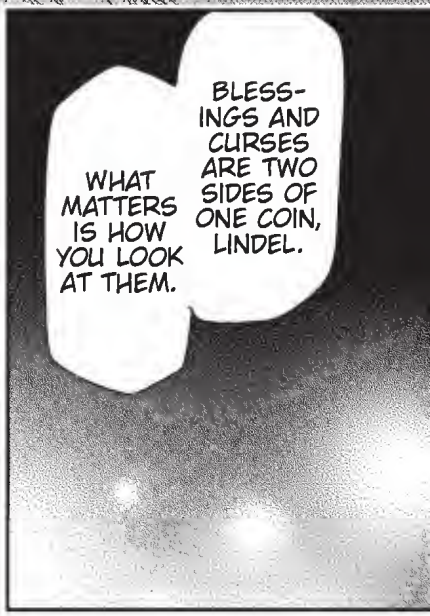

RUSSIA IS WAKING UP, AS ARE NORWAY AND SWEDEN.
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO TAKE ANOTHER CHARGE!
BUT I HAVE THE REINDEER TO FOLLOW!
ONCE YOU EXTEND A HAND OF MERCY TO A CREATURE, IT'S ONLY RIGHT TO STAY AT ITS SIDE UNTIL IT CAN STAND ALONE AGAIN.
WHY ME?!
THE DAYS WHEN YOU COULD HIDE YOURSELF FROM THE EYES OF THE WORLD AND LIVE YOUR NOMADIC LIFE ARE **ENDING.**
BESIDES, IT'S HIGH TIME YOU CONSIDERED TAKING AN APPRENTICE.
.....
I TAUGHT YOU THAT.
OUR KIND IS *NOT* MEANT TO LIVE IN SOLITUDE.
EVEN *SAINTS* FIND THAT DIFFICULT.
TO "LOVE YOUR ENEMY."
I WON'T TELL YOU...

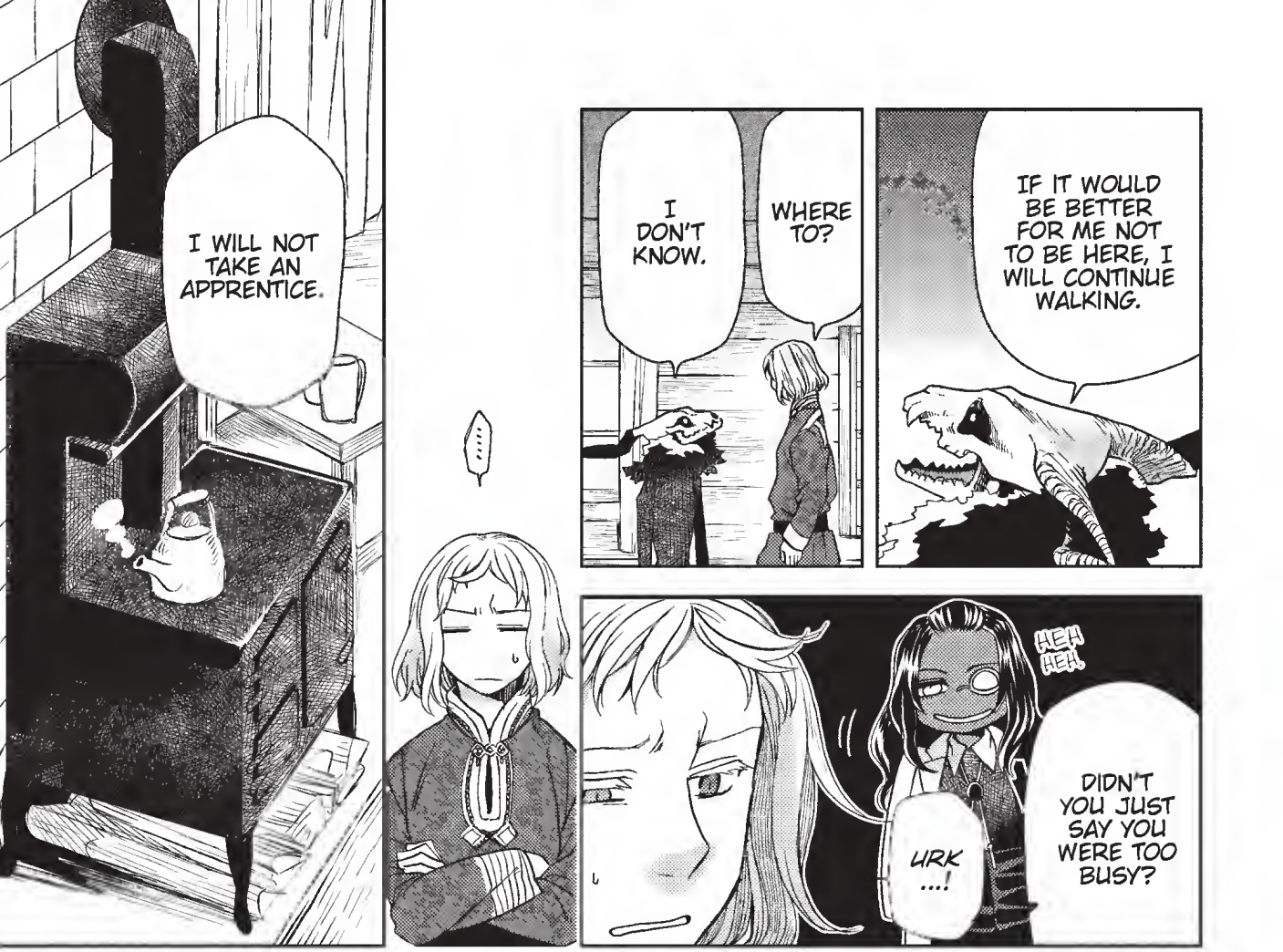

BUT WE CAN'T DENY THAT THE NEIGHBORS LOVE OUR KIND.
WE WERE BORN AS PART OF THIS VAST WORLD, AND TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY...
WE OUGHT TO RETURN LOVE FOR LOVE...
AND LEND A STAFF TO THOSE WHO WANDER. THAT IS OUR DUTY.

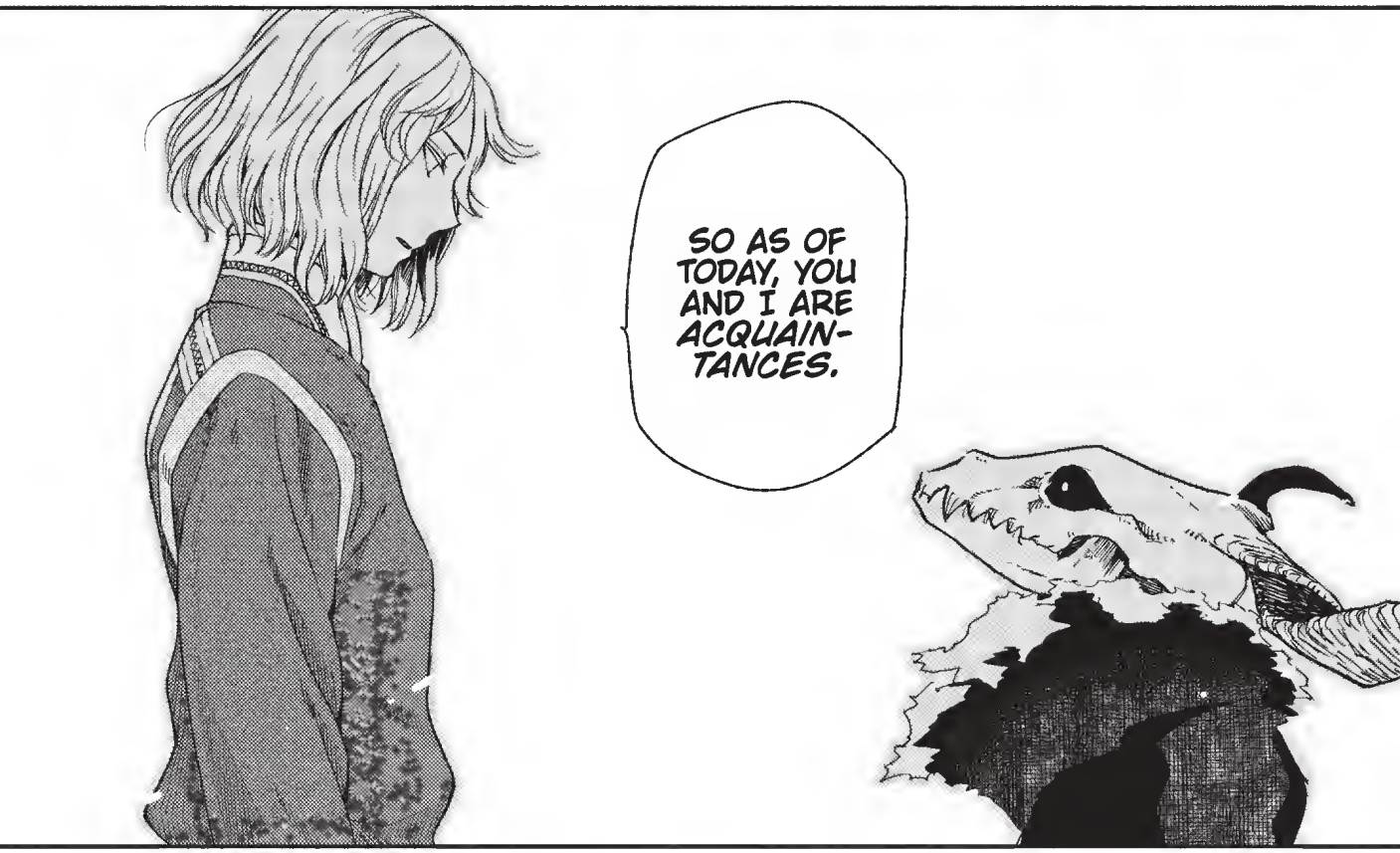

WE NEVER ASKED TO BE LOVED!
YOU AND I...
ALL OF US ARE CURSED.

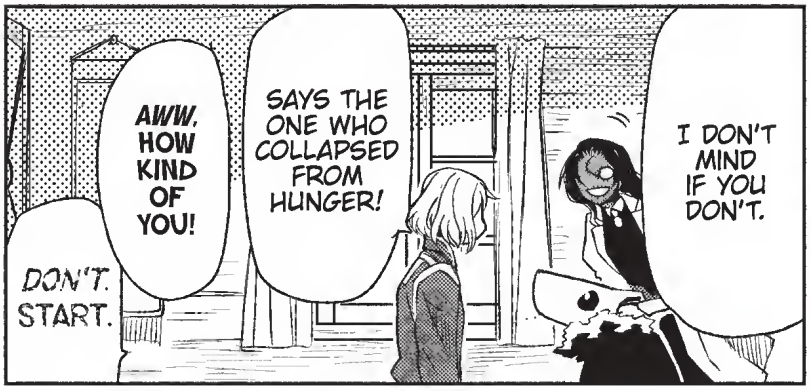

IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I'LL MOVE ON.

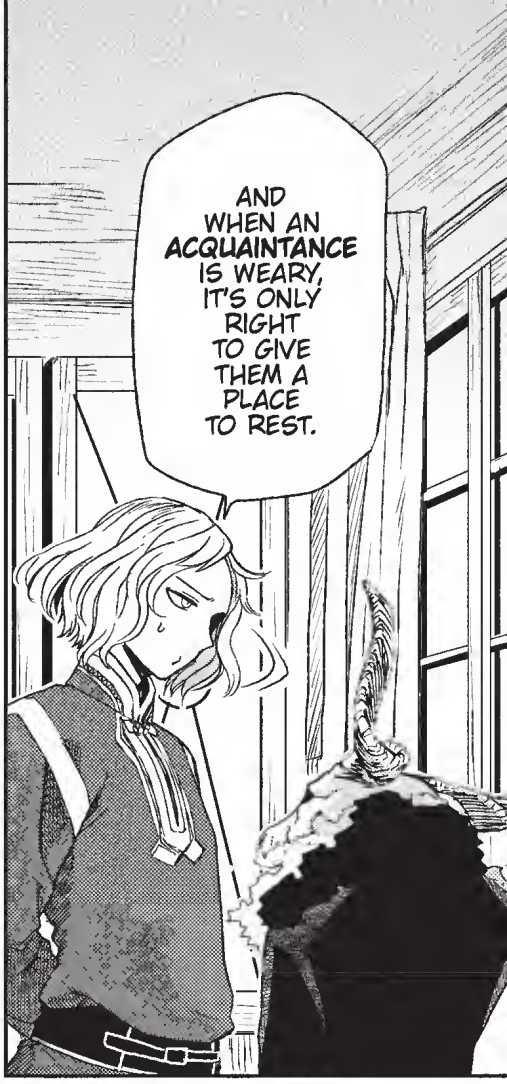



BLESS-INGS AND CURSES ARE TWO SIDES OF ONE COIN, LINDEL.
WHAT MATTERS IS HOW YOU LOOK AT THEM.


I WILL NOT TAKE AN APPRENTICE.
...
WHERE TO?
I DON'T KNOW.
IF IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR ME NOT TO BE HERE, I WILL CONTINUE WALKING.
HEH HEH.
URK ...!
DIDN'T YOU JUST SAY YOU WERE TOO BUSY?

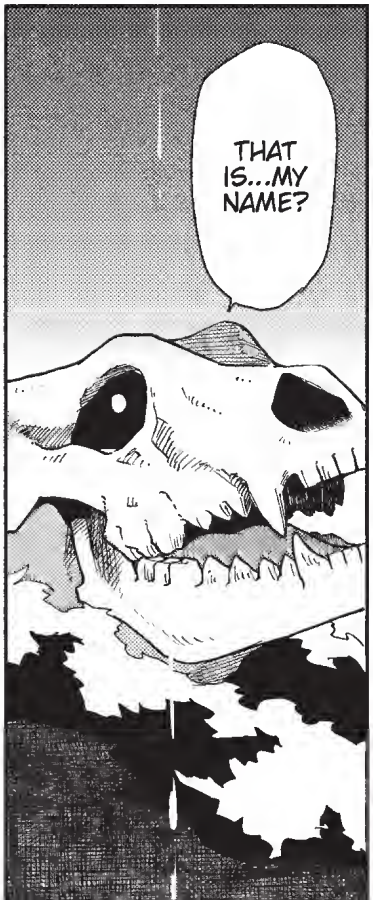

SO AS OF TODAY, YOU AND I ARE ACQUAIN-TANCES.


I DON'T MIND IF YOU DON'T.
SAYS THE ONE WHO COLLAPSED FROM HUNGER!
AWW, HOW KIND OF YOU!
DON'T. START.

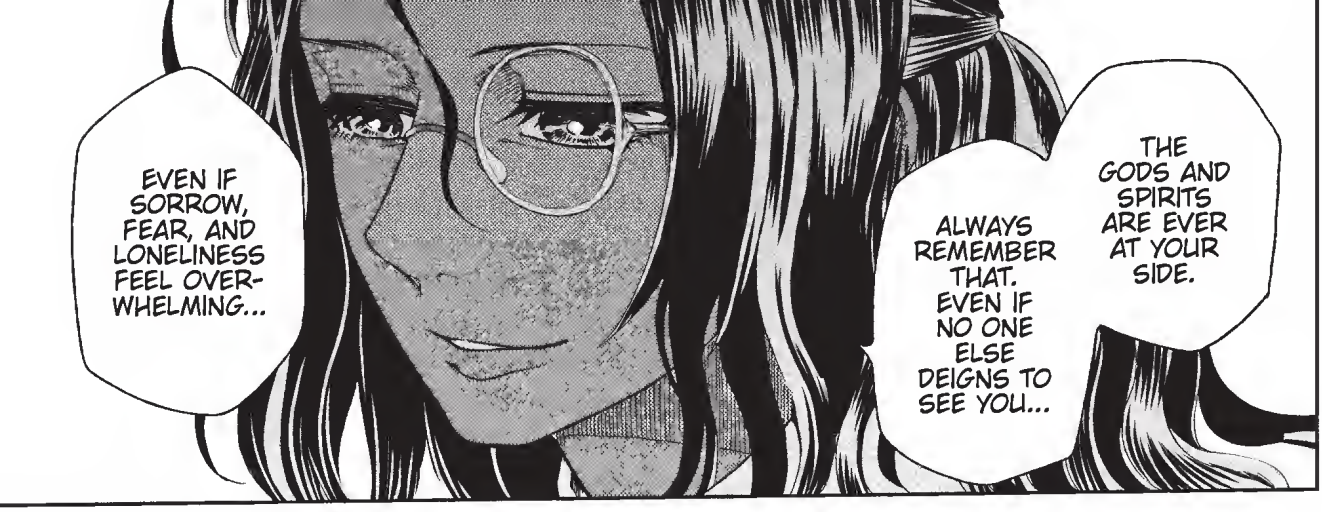

AND WHEN AN ACQUAINTANCE IS WEARY, IT'S ONLY RIGHT TO GIVE THEM A PLACE TO REST.

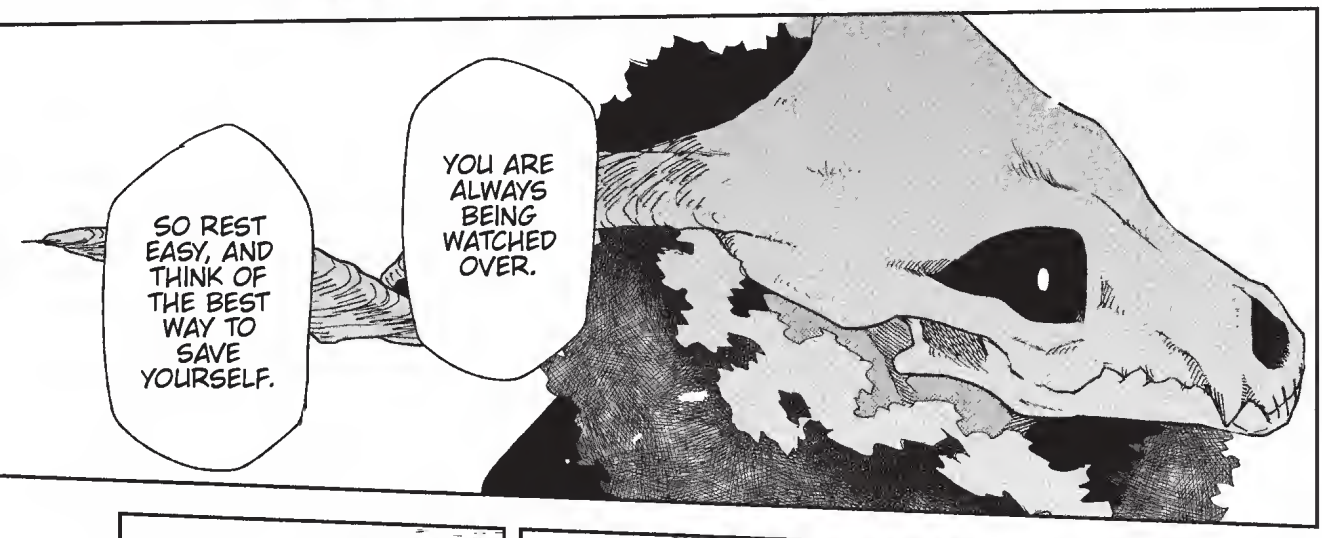


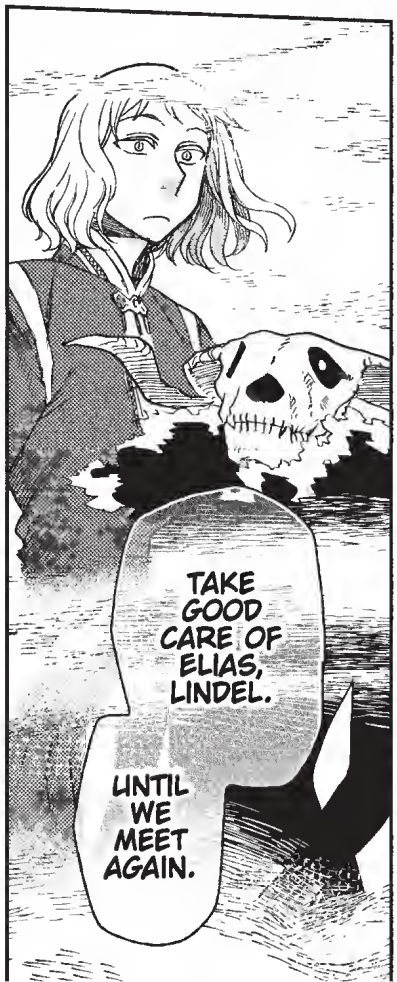

WELL, I GUESS THIS MEANS WE'RE FAMILY NOW!
AND HERE YOU ARE WITH NO NAME. WHAT SHALL WE CALL YOU?
Hmm...
SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN SO FOND OF NAMING THINGS...

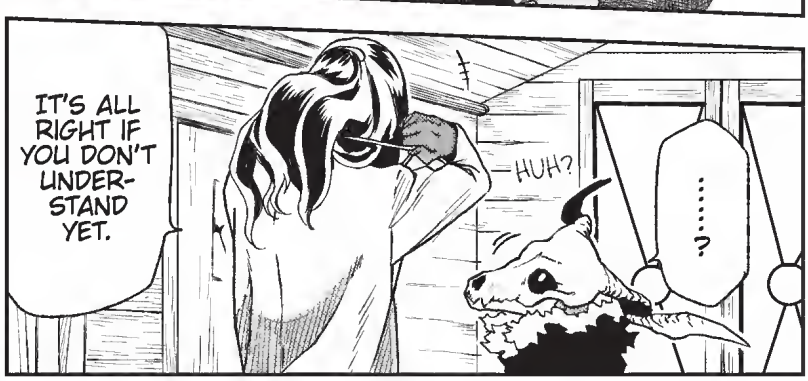

THAT IS...MY NAME?

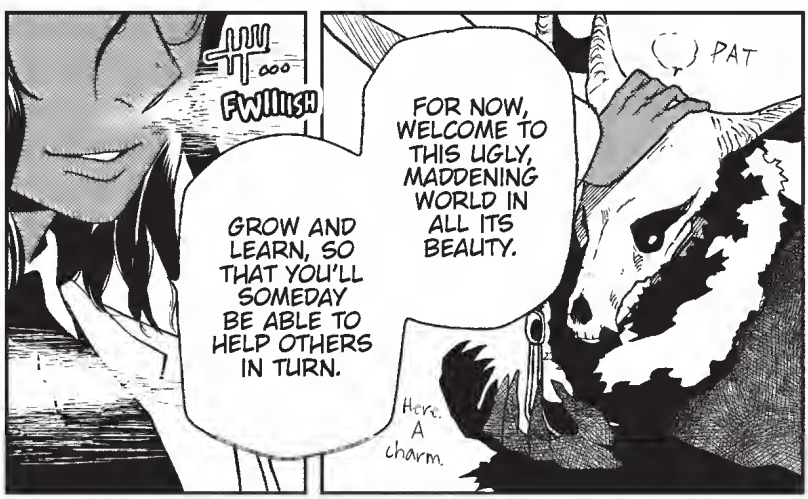

ELIAS.


EVEN IF SORROW, FEAR, AND LONELINESS FEEL OVER-WHELMING...
ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT. EVEN IF NO ONE ELSE DEIGNS TO SEE YOU...
THE GODS AND SPIRITS ARE EVER AT YOUR SIDE.

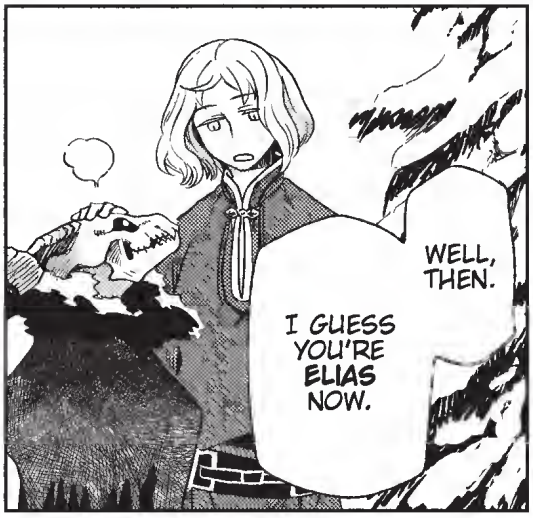

SO REST EASY, AND THINK OF THE BEST WAY TO SAVE YOURSELF.
YOU ARE ALWAYS BEING WATCHED OVER.


TAKE GOOD CARE OF ELIAS, LINDEL.
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.


IT'S ALL RIGHT IF YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND YET.
—HUH?
.....?

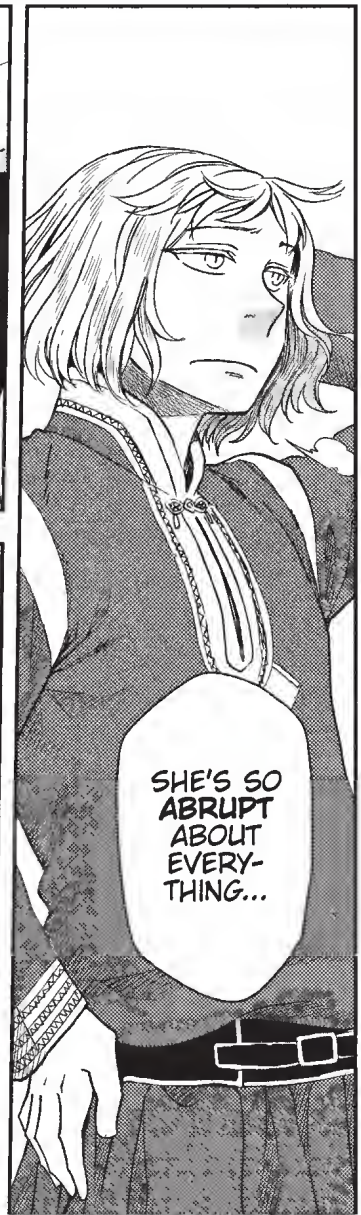

FWIIISH
GROW AND LEARN, SO THAT YOU'LL SOMEDAY BE ABLE TO HELP OTHERS IN TURN.
PAT
FOR NOW, WELCOME TO THIS UGLY, MADDENING WORLD IN ALL ITS BEAUTY.
Here. A charm.




WELL, THEN.
I GUESS YOU'RE ELIAS NOW.



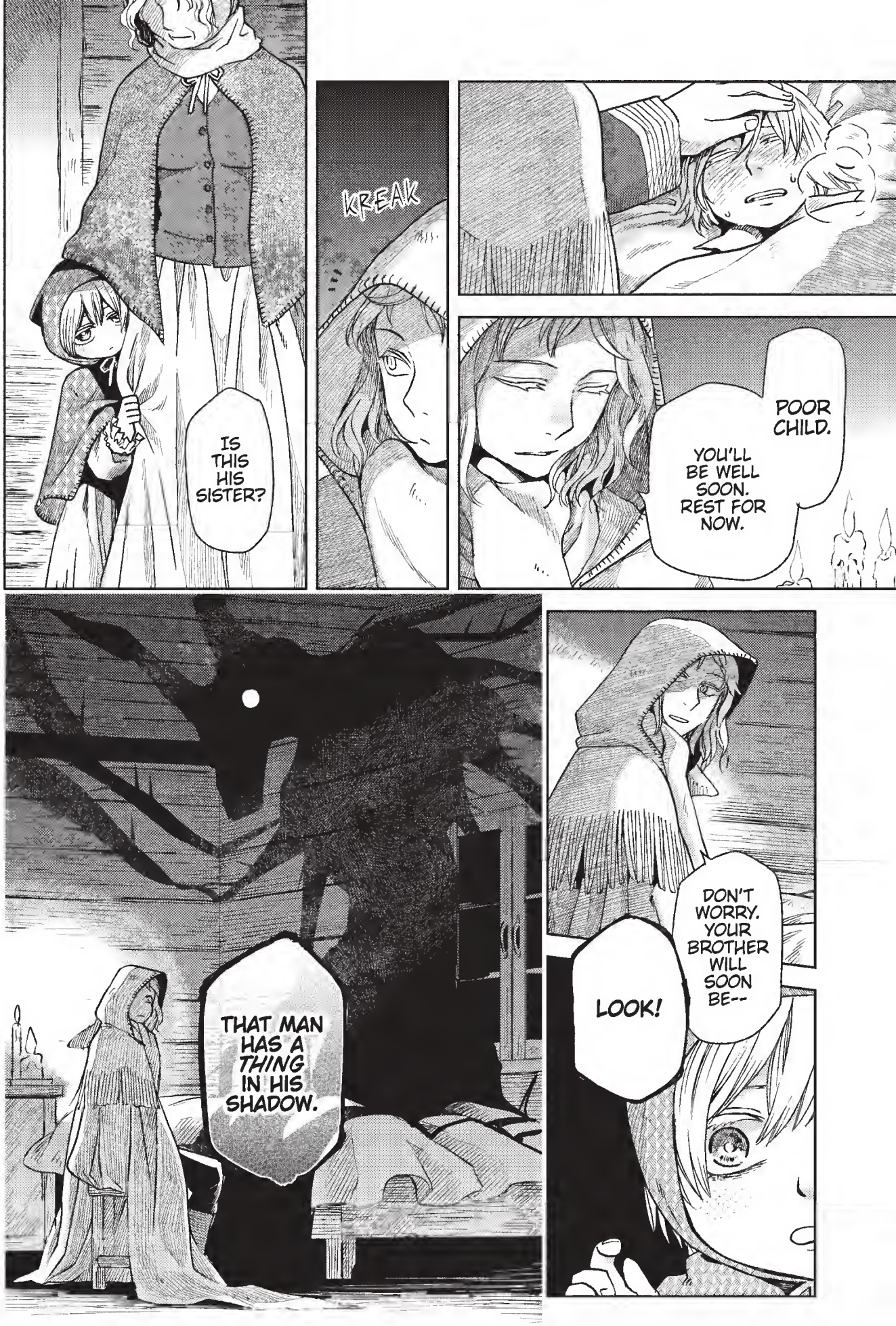

I'VE NO IDEA WHERE YOU WERE TRYING TO GO, WALKING ALONE...
BUT FOR NOW, TAKE A BREAK FROM YOUR JOURNEY.


SHE'S SO ABRUPT ABOUT EVERY-THING...


ALL RIGHT.
FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS...
ELIAS AND I FOLLOWED THE REINDEER TOGETHER.
WE WALKED FOREST PATHS, ADMIRED LAKE VIEWS, AND TRAVELED OVER THE PLAINS.
PSTL
HMM?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
DON'T TAKE WHAT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO EAT.
SQUEEEK


TAKE AS MUCH AS YOU NEED, BUT NO MORE.
AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO EAT A BEAST, KILL IT QUICKLY AND PAIN-LESSLY.
I UNDER-STAND.
SHOULD I NOT?
NO.
ELIAS SEEMED TO BE... MISSING SOME-THING.
HE LEARNED QUICKLY, BUT IT ALWAYS SEEMED AS IF HE WAS OBSERVING EVERYTHING FROM THE OUTSIDE.
ONE DAY OUR SUPPLIES RAN LOW...
SO WE WENT DOWN TO A VILLAGE.
ZLORP
STAY HIDDEN INSIDE MY SHADOW.
I MAY NEED TO MAKE SOME MEDICINE. YOU WATCH FROM THERE.
ALL RIGHT.

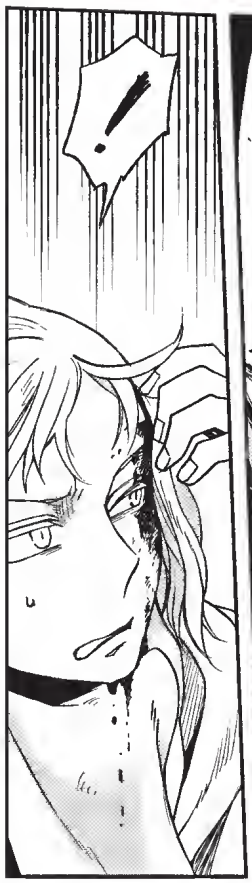

NOK
NOK
NOK
I'LL GLADLY OFFER HEALING IN EXCHANGE FOR A LITTLE FOOD.
GREET-INGS!
I AM A SHAMAN. ARE THERE ANY SICK OR INJURED WITHIN?
A SHA-MAN! WEL-COME!
YOUR COMING IS TIMELY. MY GRANDSON IS ABED WITH A FEVER.
KREAK
A FEVER? I MAY BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT.
KREEE
FLICKER


IS THIS HIS SISTER?
KREAK
POOR CHILD.
YOU'LL BE WELL SOON. REST FOR NOW.
DON'T WORRY. YOUR BROTHER WILL SOON BE--
LOOK!
THAT MAN HAS A *THING* IN HIS SHADOW.


IT'S SCARY--!
SHOVE
I'M SORRY, LINDEL.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!
DON'T APOLO-GIZE!
CURS-ES!
THERE WAS A CHILD WITH THE SIGHT IN THE HOUSE!
SKFF
SKFF
SKFF
MON-STER!
THAT WAS A MONSTER POSING AS A SHAMAN!
What?
DE-MON!
IT CAME TO SPIRIT OUR CHILDREN AWAY!
HURL


KONK
NGH ...!




!

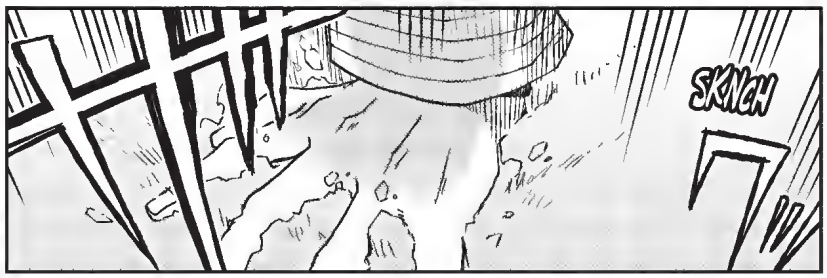

ZLORP
ズルル




Gah--!
SHUNK
AAIEEEE--!


TWITCH
ELIAS, NO!
STOP!!


SKNCH
SKNCH
SKNCH


SKNCH


VEIL OF THE FOREST!
LIFT THY CURTAIN AND ALLOW US TO PASS!

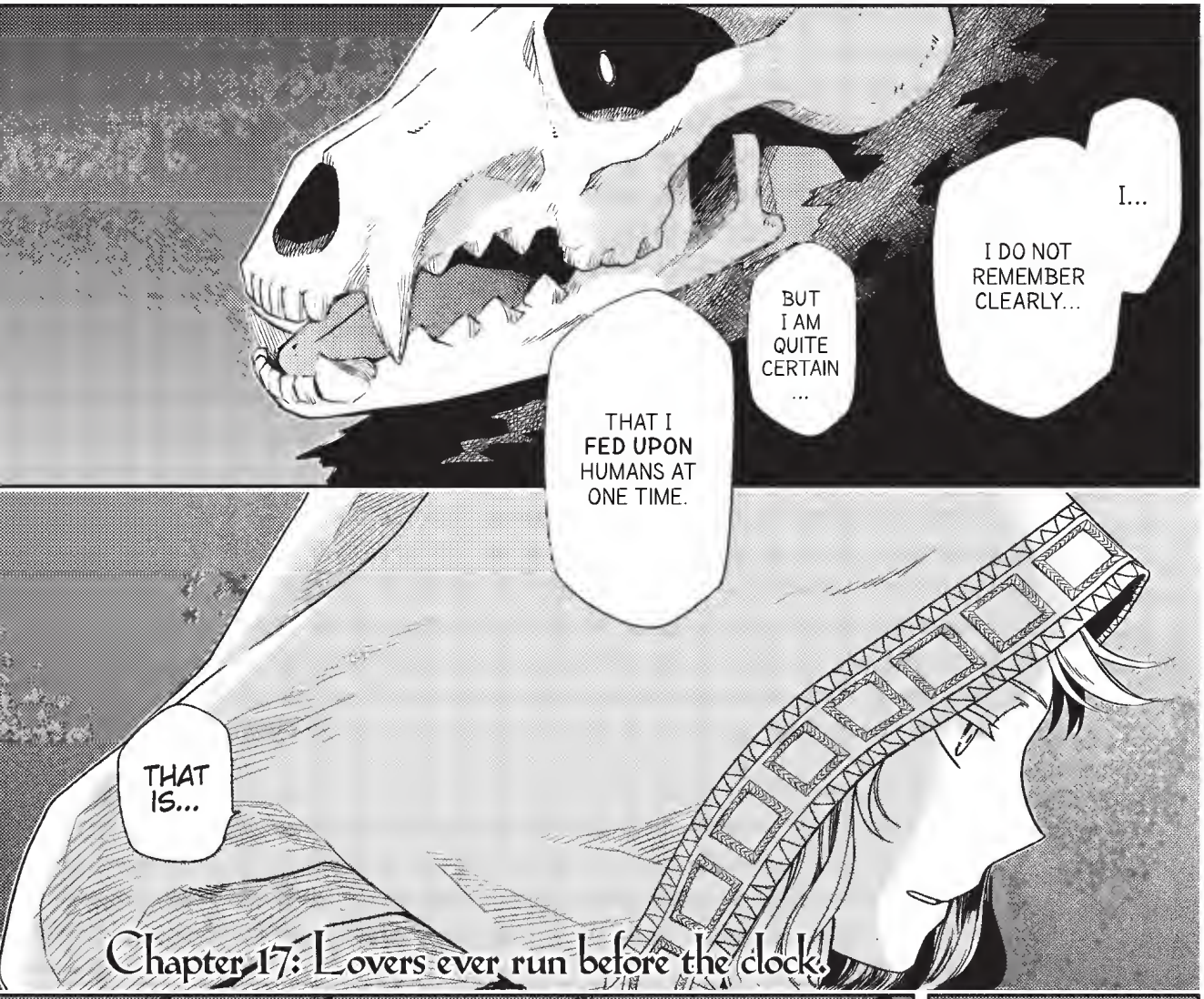

THEY... VAN-ISHED?
WHERE ARE WE?
THE FAR SIDE OF THE FOREST'S VEIL...
WHERE THE GODS AND SPIRITS RESIDE.
DRIP DRIP
TMP
WHILE HERE, WE CAN'T BE SEEN BY HUMANS...
BUT THIS IS NOT A PLACE FOR MORTALS TO TREAD.
WOBBLE
WE... MUST LEAVE QUICKLY ...


WE CAN USE MAGIC WITHOUT A NEIGHBOR'S AID...
BUT IT'S VERY...VERY DRAINING...
HUFF
SLUMP
LINDEL, WHAT IS WRONG?
TIRED... THIS IS... WHAT HAPPENS...
WHEN WE USE MAGIC... RASHLY.
TMP
TMP
SWFF
TUG
GLANCE
GLANCE
!
SPRUCE...?


LEAD US...
TO WHERE LINDEL'S REINDEER AWAIT US.
GUIDE US.
FLOTTER
THE CANTRIP I ONCE SHOWED HIM...
SNIFF
KRAKL
KRAKL
KRAKL
PLASH
KRAKL
KRAKL
POP
WELL!
YOU'RE FAR DEFTER THAN I THOUGHT.


THANK YOU, ELIAS.
SCRAPE
SCRAPE
I'VE SEEN YOU DO IT MORE THAN ONCE.
I'M GLAD YOU WERE THERE. YOU SAVED ME.
SKFF
SKFF
HAD I NOT BEEN THERE, YOU'D HAVE HAD NO TROUBLE TO BEGIN WITH.
THAT'S DIFFER-ENT.
I...
I DO NOT RE-MEMBER CLEARLY...
FLOP
LINDEL.
HM?


BUT I AM QUITE CERTAIN...
THAT I *FED UPON* HUMANS AT ONE TIME.

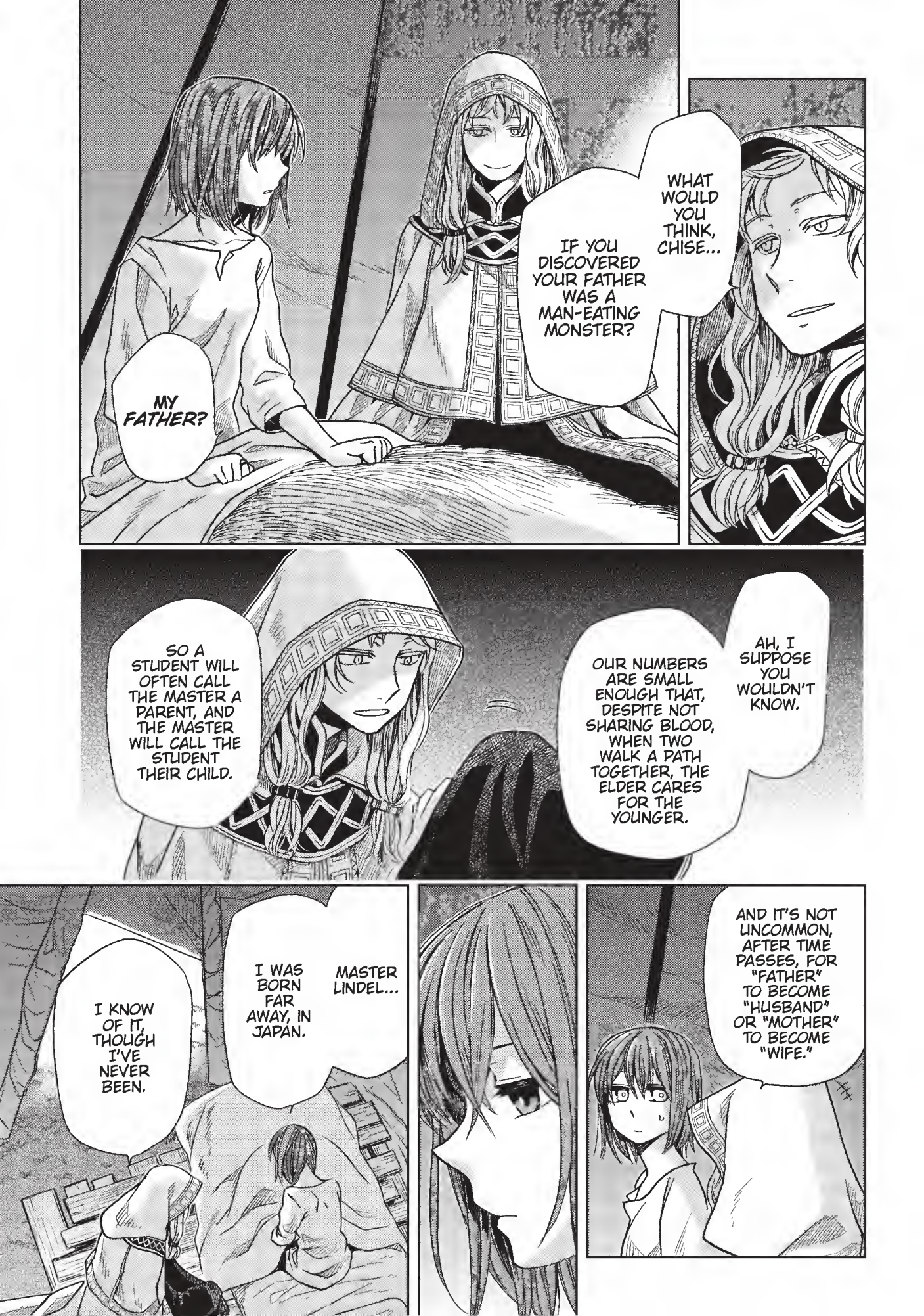


Chapter 17: Lovers ever run before the clock.





Chapter 17:
Lovers ever run before the clock.


MY FATHER?
IF YOU DISCOVERED YOUR FATHER WAS A MAN-EATING MONSTER?
WHAT WOULD YOU THINK, CHISE...
SO A STUDENT WILL OFTEN CALL THE MASTER A PARENT, AND THE MASTER WILL CALL THE STUDENT THEIR CHILD.
OUR NUMBERS ARE SMALL ENOUGH THAT, DESPITE NOT SHARING BLOOD, WHEN TWO WALK A PATH TOGETHER, THE ELDER CARES FOR THE YOUNGER.
AH, I SUPPOSE YOU WOULDN'T KNOW.
I KNOW OF IT, THOUGH I'VE NEVER BEEN.
I WAS BORN FAR AWAY, IN JAPAN.
MASTER LINDEL...
AND IT'S NOT UNCOMMON, AFTER TIME PASSES, FOR "FATHER" TO BECOME "HUSBAND" OR "MOTHER" TO BECOME "WIFE."


IN JAPAN, THERE WERE...LOTS OF BEINGS FROM THE OTHER SIDE, JUST LIKE HERE.
SOME OF THEM SAID HUMANS WERE DELICIOUS-- OR REVOLTING.
SOME OF THEM WOULD POUNCE AT ME...
AND OTHERS WOULD STALK ME FOR HOURS. EITHER WAY...
I WAS TERRI-FIED.
NOT A SINGLE TIME.
SO, EVEN IF HE SAYS HE ATE HUMANS AT SOME POINT, I--
ELIAS ISN'T LIKE THAT.
LOTS OF FREAKY THINGS HAVE HAPPENED SINCE I MET HIM, BUT HE'S NEVER SCARED ME.
SWFF


SHOULDN'T YOU SAY THESE THINGS TO HIM, NOT ME?
SO, WHAT DID YOU SAY WHEN HE TOLD YOU THAT, MASTER LINDEL?
I WASN'T EXPECTING SUCH A THOUGHT-FUL REPLY.
WELL, THAT'S TRUE. MY APOLO-GIES.
UM... BUT YOU ASKED, SO...
ME?
WELL...

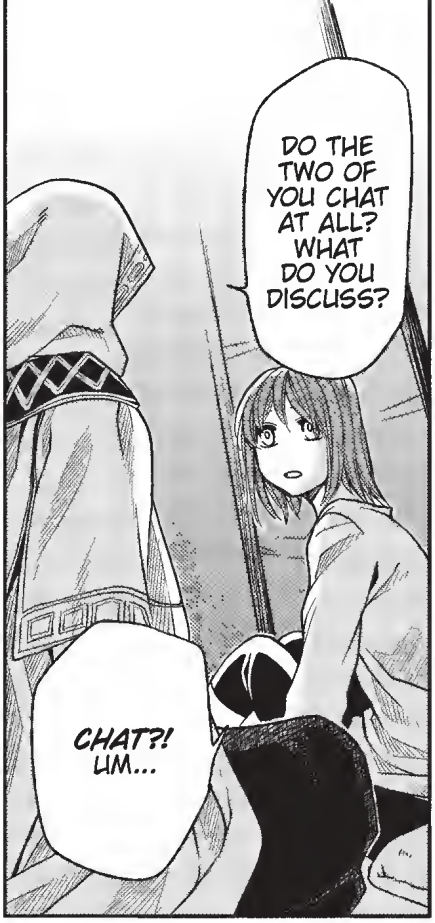

I PROBABLY TASTE *MARVELOUS*, BUT DON'T EAT ME, OKAY?
ER...
I WON'T.
GOOD!
BUT...
WELL...
MUCH AS I DISLIKE THE IDEA, I DO SOMETIMES STILL FEEL A CRAVING.
IT'S EASY FOR ME TO RESIST, BUT...
DON'T HUMANS FEAR AND LOATHE THINGS LIKE ME, BECAUSE WE EAT THEM...?
THAT'S A REASONABLE QUESTION.
ORDINARILY, MOST HUMANS PROBABLY WOULD.
AH...


THERE ARE **COUNTLESS THINGS** IN THE WORLD THAT FEED ON US.
BUT THE THING IS...
THE THING IS, HUMANS ARE BOTH CRUELER AND MORE COWARDLY THAN ANY OTHER LIVING THING.
THEY CAN BE **SENSITIVE** ABOUT TALK OF BEING EATEN, SO I SUGGEST NOT RAISING THE SUBJECT.
NOD
WOLVES EAT REINDEER. FOXES EAT RABBITS. CATS EAT MICE.
SOME PEOPLE WORSHIP **BEARS** AS GODS, FOR EXAMPLE-- EVEN THOUGH BEARS EAT HUMANS.
I... SEE.
IT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD. WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?
I HEAR THERE'S NO SNOW IN THE SOUTH, SO YOU CAN FIND THINGS TO EAT EVERY-WHERE!
YOU OUGHT TO TRAVEL **SOUTH** SOMEDAY!
OH, I KNOW!

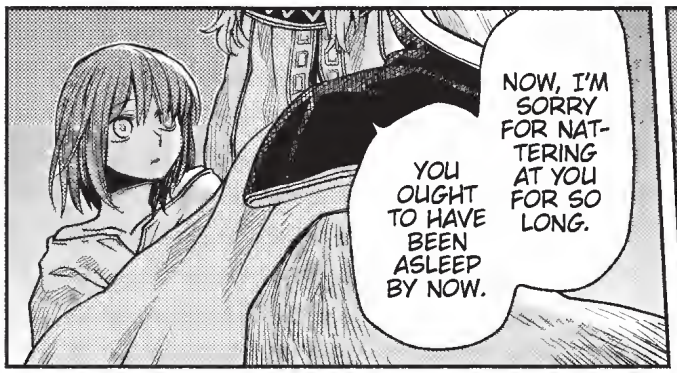

I'LL ADMIT ...
IT WASN'T THE SUBTLEST CHANGE OF SUBJECT.
UH... OKAY.
THE TRUTH IS, I WAS QUITE FRIGHT-ENED.
YOU WERE? REALLY?
IF YOU GO THERE AND TRY ALL MANNER OF NEW FLAVORS...
IT MIGHT WELL HELP YOU FORGET ALL ABOUT THE TASTE OF HUMANS.
I WAS WEARY OF MY LONG LIFE, BUT THAT HARDLY MEANT I WAS READY TO DIE.
AND WOULDN'T ANYONE BE TAKEN ABACK TO LEARN THAT THE CAT PURRING ON THEIR LAP WAS REALLY A MAN-EATER?
HE COM-PARED ELIAS TO A CAT...
BUT ULTIMATELY, ELIAS WAS A COMPANION WHO'D TRAVELED AT MY SIDE FOR YEARS.

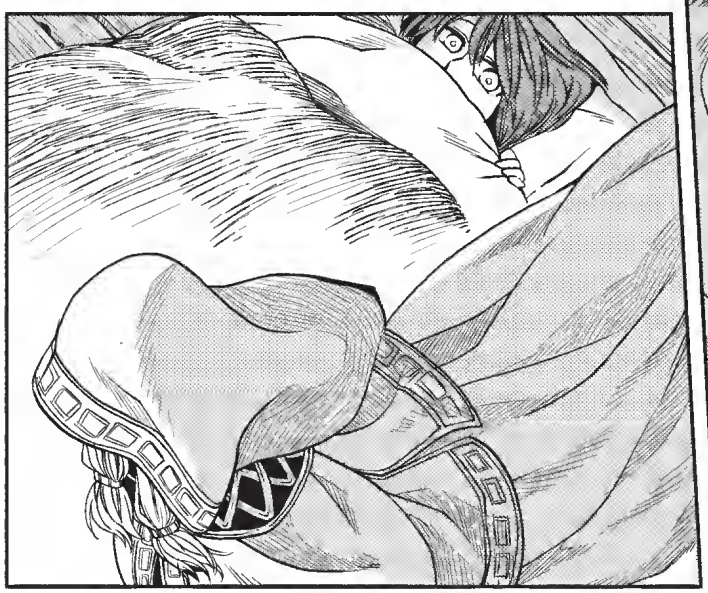

ANY TRACE OF FEAR VANISHED WITH MY FIRST MOUTHFUL OF THE STEW HE'D MADE ME.
WHICH, I MIGHT ADD, WAS THE MOST DISGUSTING THING I'D EVER TASTED.
Too much salt. The potatoes were half raw. And it had an inexplicable stench...
I'M GLAD HE HAS SILKY AS A HOUSE-KEEPER NOW...!
NOT LONG AFTER, I BECAME CARETAKER HERE, AND HE CONTINUED TO TRAVEL ON HIS OWN.
HEH! I BEGAN THIS STORY THINKING I'D GIVE THAT STODGY OLD BONEHEAD A SWAT UPSIDE THE SKULL, WHILE GIVING YOU A WARNING...
BUT IT SEEMS TO HAVE WOUND UP BEING A TALE OF HIS FOIBLES MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.
I DO WONDER, THOUGH...IS HE SIMPLY CLINGING TO THE WORDS OF ADVICE I GAVE HIM SO LONG AGO...
OR HAS SOMETHING ELSE AFFECTED HIM SINCE THEN...? EITHER WAY, IT SOUNDS AS IF HE DOESN'T OPEN HIMSELF UP TO ANYONE AT ALL.

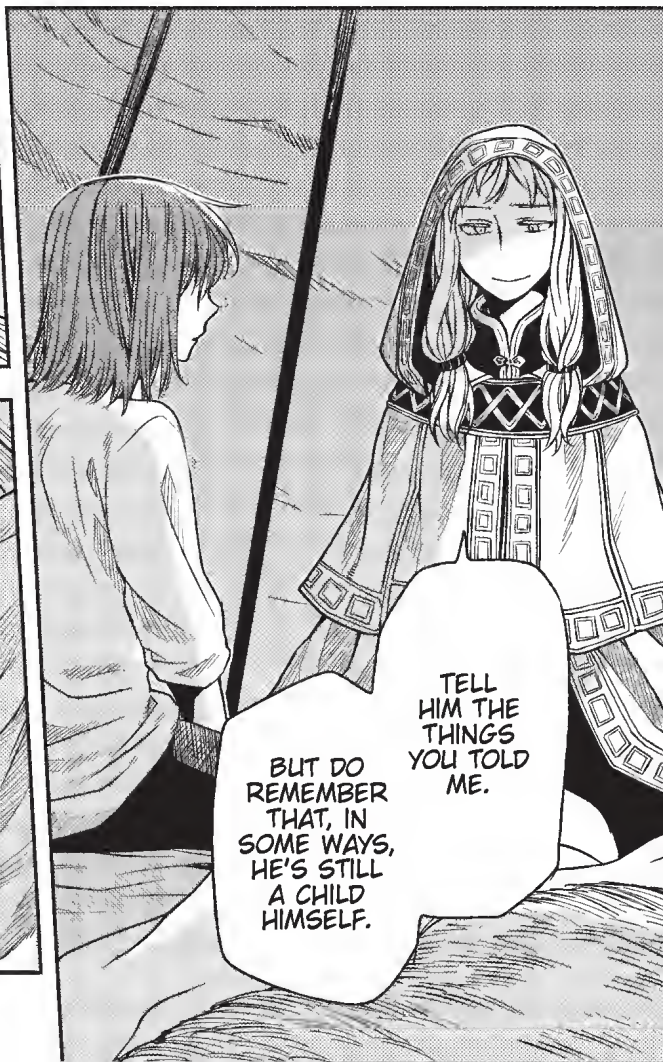

.....
I SEE. I'D SAY YOU BOTH NEED TO BE MORE FORTH-COMING WITH EACH OTHER.
YOU'RE AS BAD AS HE IS.


DO THE TWO OF YOU CHAT AT ALL? WHAT DO YOU DISCUSS?
CHAT?! UM...

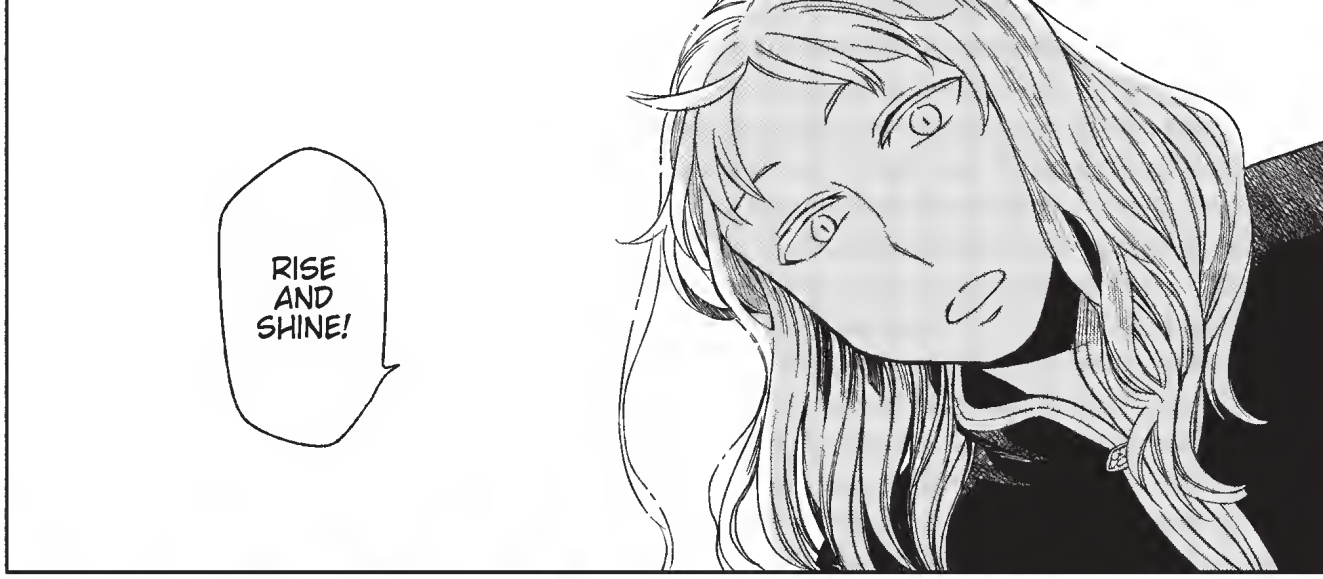

TAP
TAP
SPEAK TO HIM AS YOU SPOKE TO ME TODAY.
BUT I KNOW YOU HAVE IT IN YOU.

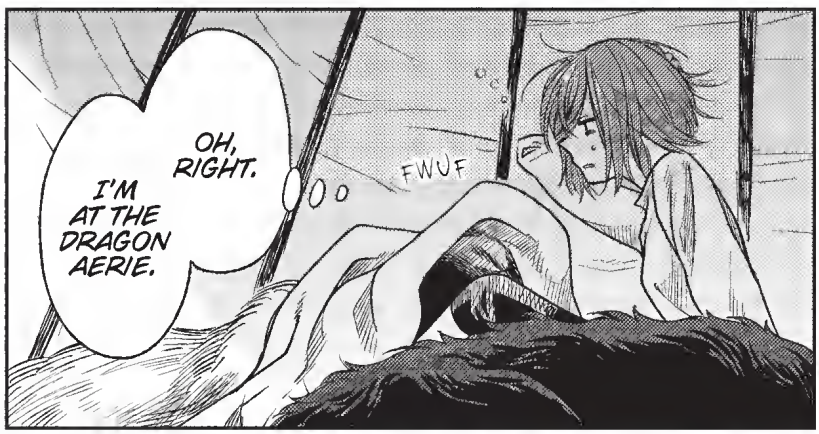

NOW, I'M SORRY FOR NAT-TERING AT YOU FOR SO LONG.
YOU OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASLEEP BY NOW.



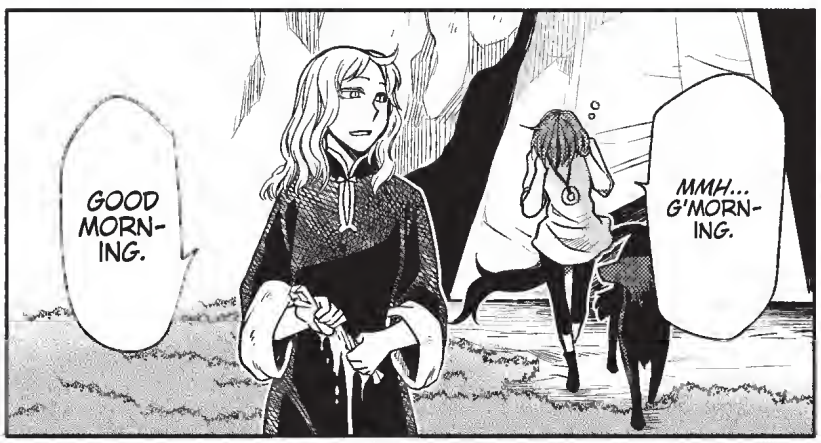

TELL HIM THE THINGS YOU TOLD ME.
BUT DO REMEMBER THAT, IN SOME WAYS, HE'S STILL A CHILD HIMSELF.


THAT WASN'T A DREAM.
HE TOLD MASTER LINDEL HE DOESN'T LIKE EATING HUMAN MEAT...
BUT I GUESS I LOOKED TASTY TO HIM?
NOW I KNOW SOME-THING...
THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT...
.....

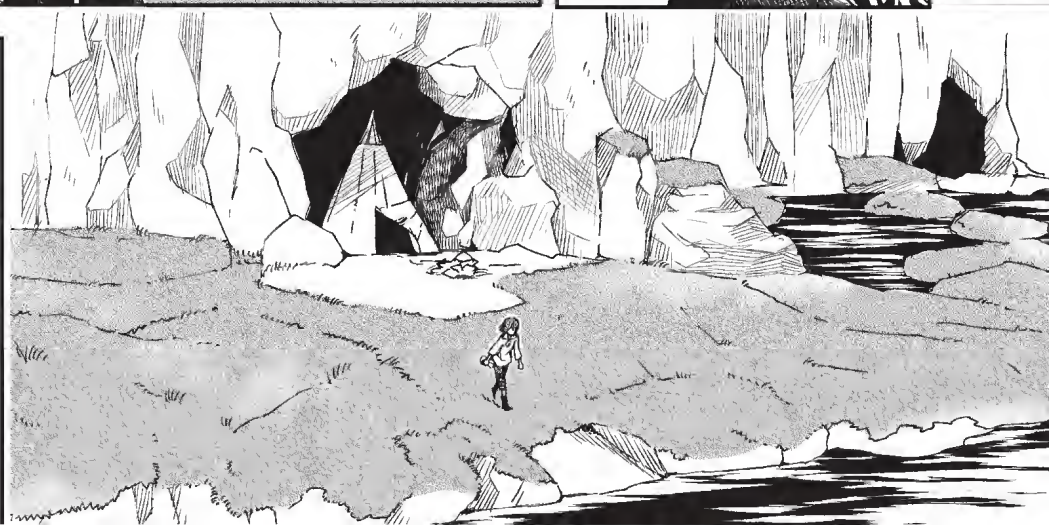

RISE AND SHINE!


OH, RIGHT.
I'M AT THE DRAGON AERIE.
FWUF


GO RINSE YOUR FACE.


GOOD MORN-ING.
MMH... G'MORN-ING.


THMP
THMP




Are you all right? Are you sore at all?
WELL... I CAN'T SAY MY BUTT ISN'T SORE FROM THE RIDE.
Morn-ing!
THMP THMP
GOOD MORN-ING.
Look! A human!
It's Chise!
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
Morn-in'!
G' morn-ing!
Morn-ing!
SHE CERTAINLY FALLS INTO THE WATER A LOT, DOESN'T SHE?
Chise --!
SPLOOSH
Oof!
UH, GOOD MOR--


BLUB

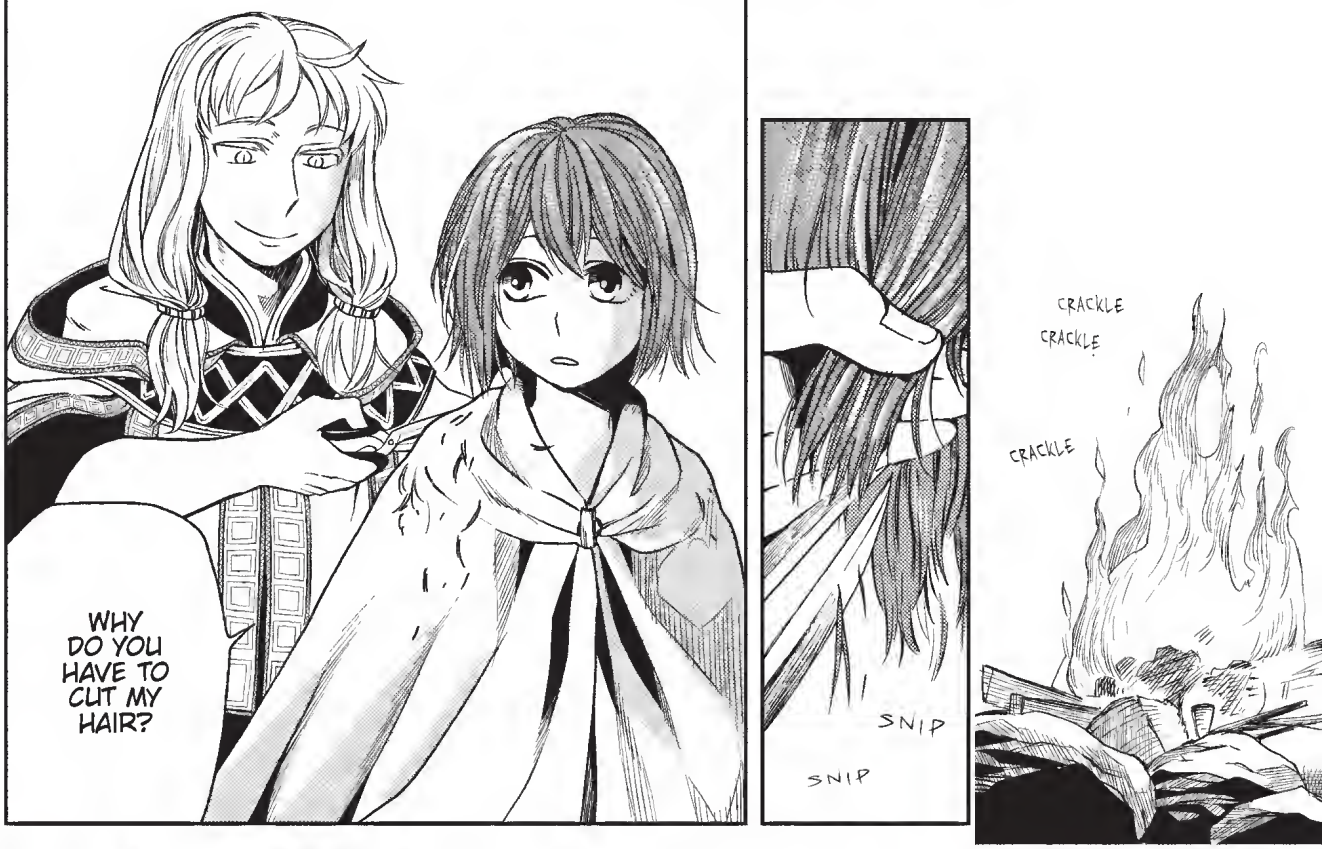

SPLASH



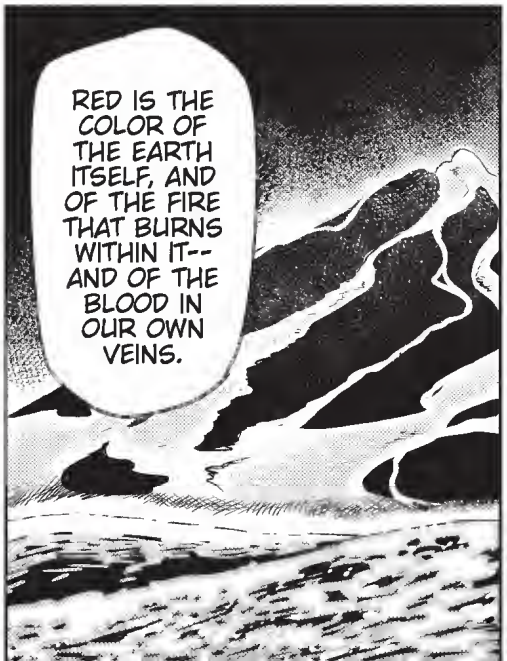

Chise! Are you okay?!
THERE'S SOMETHING... HUGE... DOWN THERE...!
?
HUFF HUFF

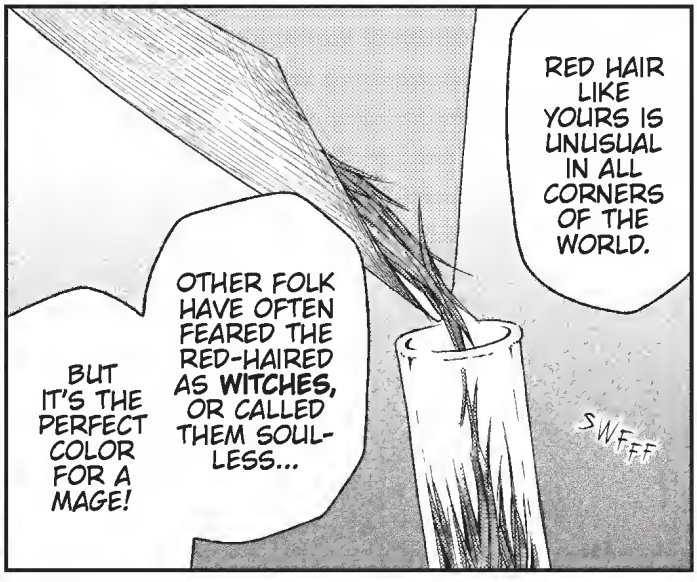


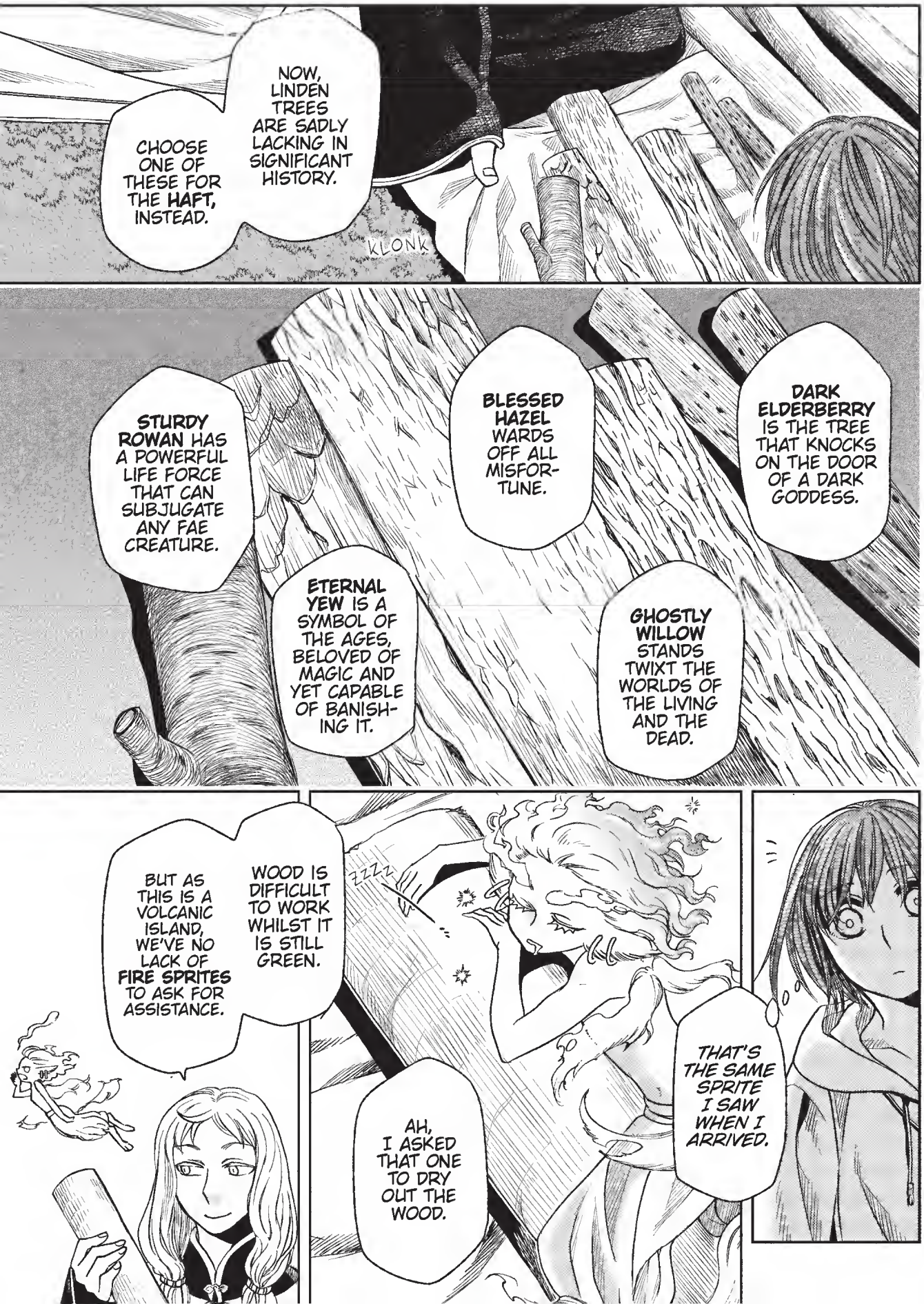


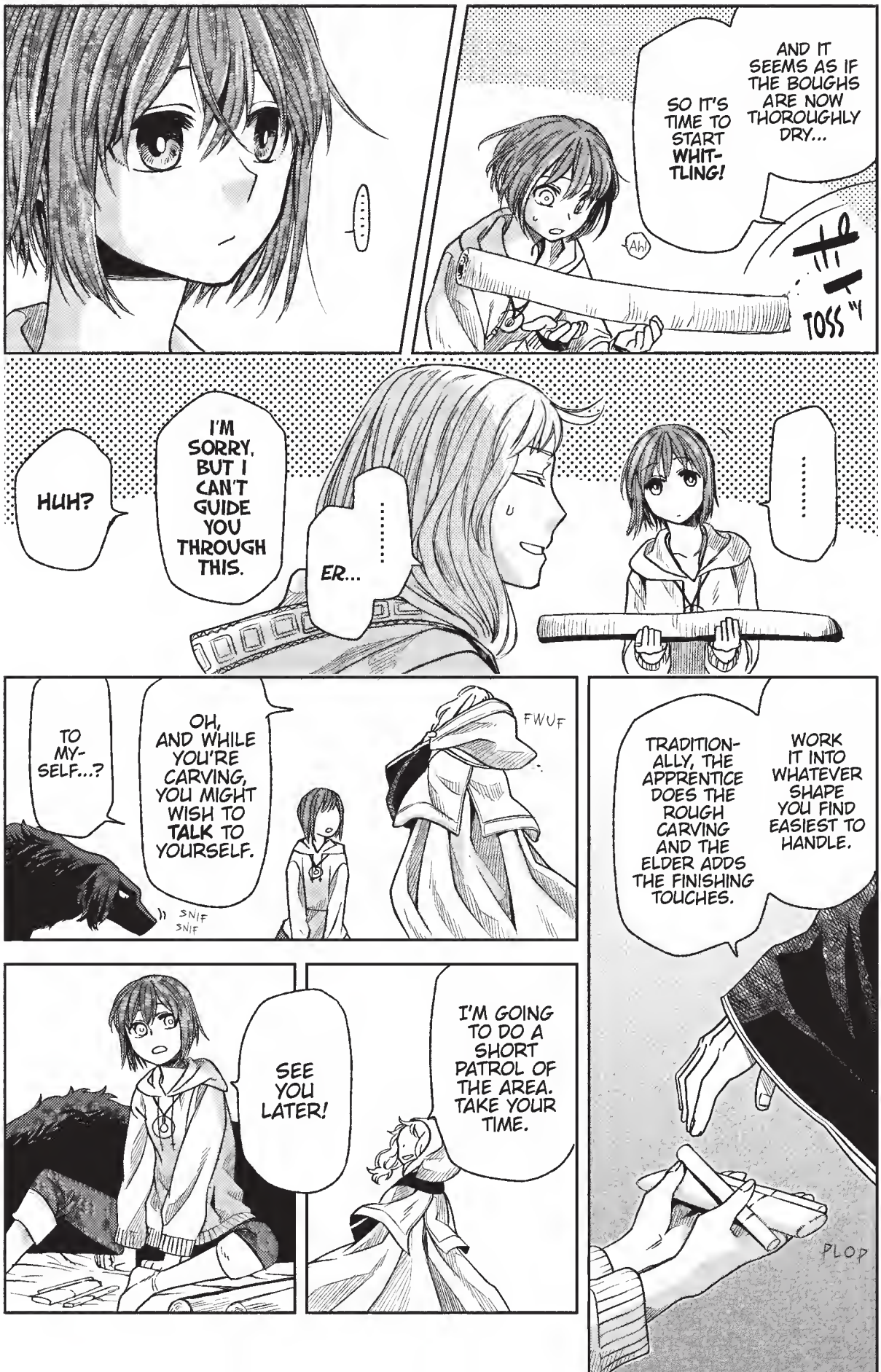

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO CUT MY HAIR?
SNIP
SNIP
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE


IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE MY HAIR WAS THIS SHORT.
PAT
PAT
THESE CLIPPINGS WILL BE THE CORE OF YOUR WAND.
IT'S BEEN KNOWN SINCE ANCIENT TIMES THAT MAGIC RESIDES IN ONE'S HAIR.


RED IS THE COLOR OF THE EARTH ITSELF, AND OF THE FIRE THAT BURNS WITHIN IT--AND OF THE BLOOD IN OUR OWN VEINS.

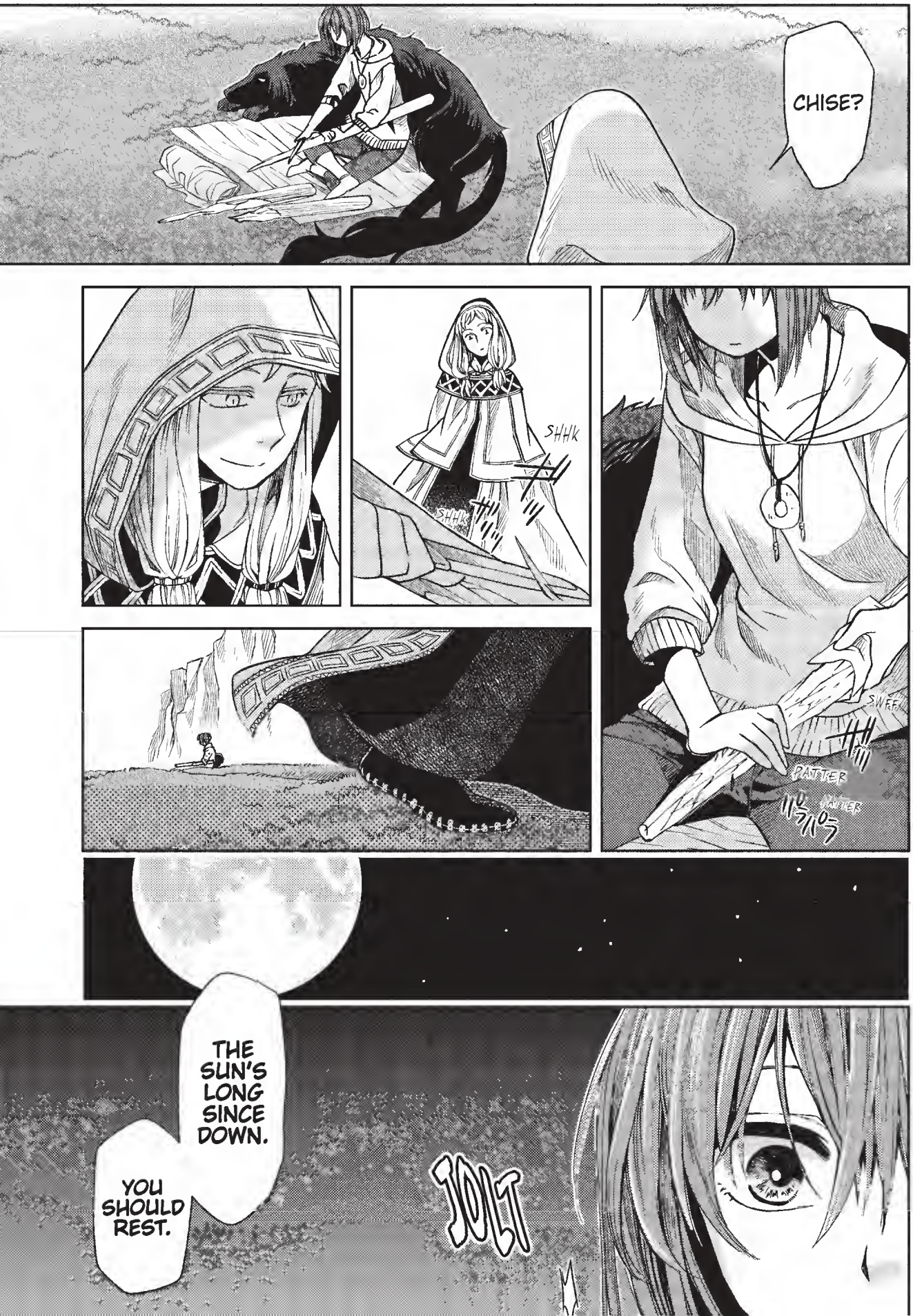

BUT IT'S THE PERFECT COLOR FOR A MAGE!
OTHER FOLK HAVE OFTEN FEARED THE RED-HAIRED AS WITCHES, OR CALLED THEM SOULLESS...
RED HAIR LIKE YOURS IS UNUSUAL IN ALL CORNERS OF THE WORLD.
SWEEP


NOW, LINDEN TREES ARE SADLY LACKING IN SIGNIFICANT HISTORY.
CHOOSE ONE OF THESE FOR THE **HAFT,** INSTEAD.
KLONK
DARK ELDERBERRY IS THE TREE THAT KNOCKS ON THE DOOR OF A DARK GODDESS.
BLESSED HAZEL WARDS OFF ALL MISFORTUNE.
STURDY ROWAN HAS A POWERFUL LIFE FORCE THAT CAN SUBJUGATE ANY FAE CREATURE.
GHOSTLY WILLOW STANDS TWIXT THE WORLDS OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.
ETERNAL YEW IS A SYMBOL OF THE AGES, BELOVED OF MAGIC AND YET CAPABLE OF BANISHING IT.
ZZZZ
THAT'S THE SAME SPRITE I SAW WHEN I ARRIVED.
AH, I ASKED THAT ONE TO DRY OUT THE WOOD.
WOOD IS DIFFICULT TO WORK WHILST IT IS STILL GREEN.
BUT AS THIS IS A VOLCANIC ISLAND, WE'VE NO LACK OF **FIRE SPRITES** TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE.


...
AND IT SEEMS AS IF THE BOUGHS ARE NOW THOROUGHLY DRY...
SO IT'S TIME TO START WHIT-TLING!
AH!
TOSS
HUH?
I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T GUIDE YOU THROUGH THIS.
ER...
...
TO MY-SELF...?
OH, AND WHILE YOU'RE CARVING, YOU MIGHT WISH TO TALK TO YOURSELF.
SNIF SNIF
FWUF
SEE YOU LATER!
I'M GOING TO DO A SHORT PATROL OF THE AREA. TAKE YOUR TIME.
TRADITION-ALLY, THE APPRENTICE DOES THE ROUGH CARVING AND THE ELDER ADDS THE FINISHING TOUCHES.
WORK IT INTO WHATEVER SHAPE YOU FIND EASIEST TO HANDLE.
PLOP


THERE'S ALWAYS LOTS OF STUFF GOING ON AT HOME. IT CAN BE DISTRACTING.
THE PEACE AND QUIET HERE LETS ME THINK.
DID I REALLY NEED TO COME ALL THE WAY TO THE AERIE FOR THIS? I COULD'VE DONE IT AT HOME.
STILL ...
PAFF
PAFF
FWWF
FWWF
SHHK...
HMM...
SWOOO...
HE SAID I SHOULD...
TALK TO...
GLANCE
Oh no, you don't. You have to talk to yourself.
We share many things, but I'm a familiar. I'm not you.
I will tell you nothing.

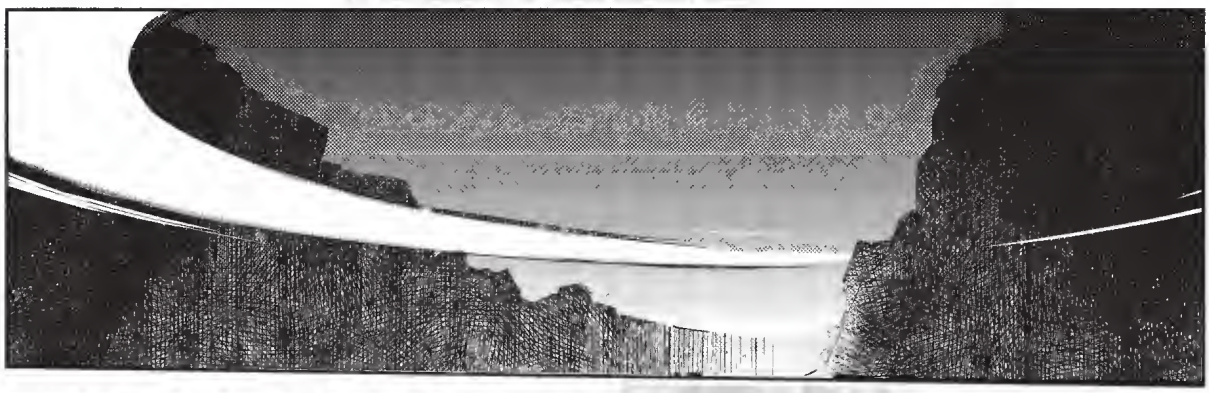

AWWW, RUTH...
HMMPH!
I GUESS I'VE NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT MY SELF THAT MUCH...
HAVE I?
ACTUALLY...
HALLO-OOO!
CHISE!

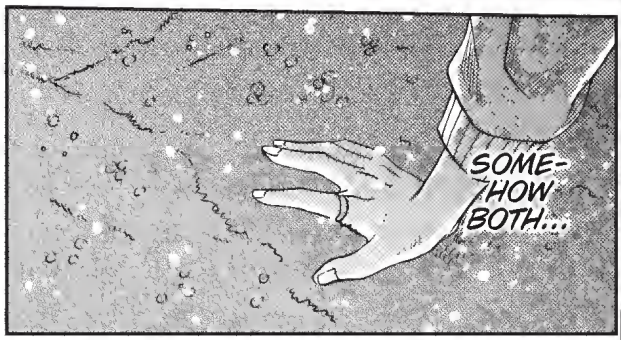

CHISE?
SHHK
SHHK
SWEEP
PATTER
PATTER
パラパラ
THE SUN'S LONG SINCE DOWN.
YOU SHOULD REST.
JOLT

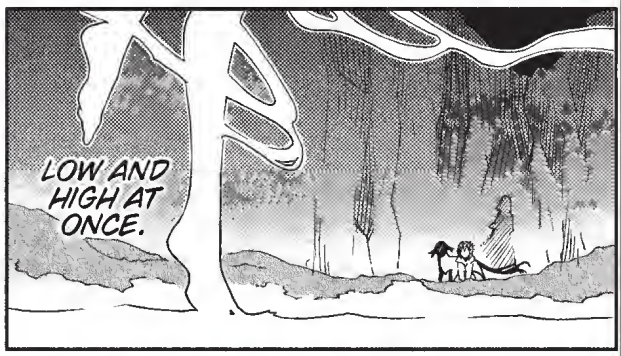

THAT WAS SOME ADMI-RABLE FOCUS.
YOU'RE NEARLY FINISHED!
WSH
HUH?
O-OH, UM...YEAH. ALMOST DONE.
MY, MY!
NOT BAD FOR A FIRST ATTEMPT. NOT BAD AT ALL.
THE MOON IS BRIGHT TONIGHT.
THERE'S SOME-THING I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU.
SET IT ASIDE FOR NOW. WE'LL FINISH IT TOMOR-ROW.


SEE THIS MOSS? FLOWERS BLOSSOM FROM IT.
FLOW-ERS?
ARE YOU AWARE OF MY OTHER NAME?
IT'S "ECHOS," RIGHT...?
THIS IS A BELOVED DWELLING PLACE OF ELVES...
AND WHERE ELVES DANCE, FLOWERS BLOOM.
JUST SO. NAMES ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO BOTH MAGES AND ALCHEMISTS.
TYPICALLY, OUR NAME SPRINGS FROM A TRUTH ABOUT US, OR A TRAIT, AND SO OTHERS OF OUR KIND ADDRESS US.
TAM TAM TUM TAM
IN DAYS OF OLD, PEOPLE COMMU-NICATED THROUGH SONG.
ALL OF MY CHANTS ARE SONGS.
TONIGHT, I WILL HAVE FLOWERS BLOOM IN YOUR HONOR.






SOME-
HOW
BOTH...


LOW AND
HIGH AT
ONCE.


THE
MELTING
OF A
GLACIER.


THE
SONG
SOUNDED
LIKE...


THE NOTES
RESONATED
ON THE WIND,
AS CLEAR AS
COLD SPRING
WATER.



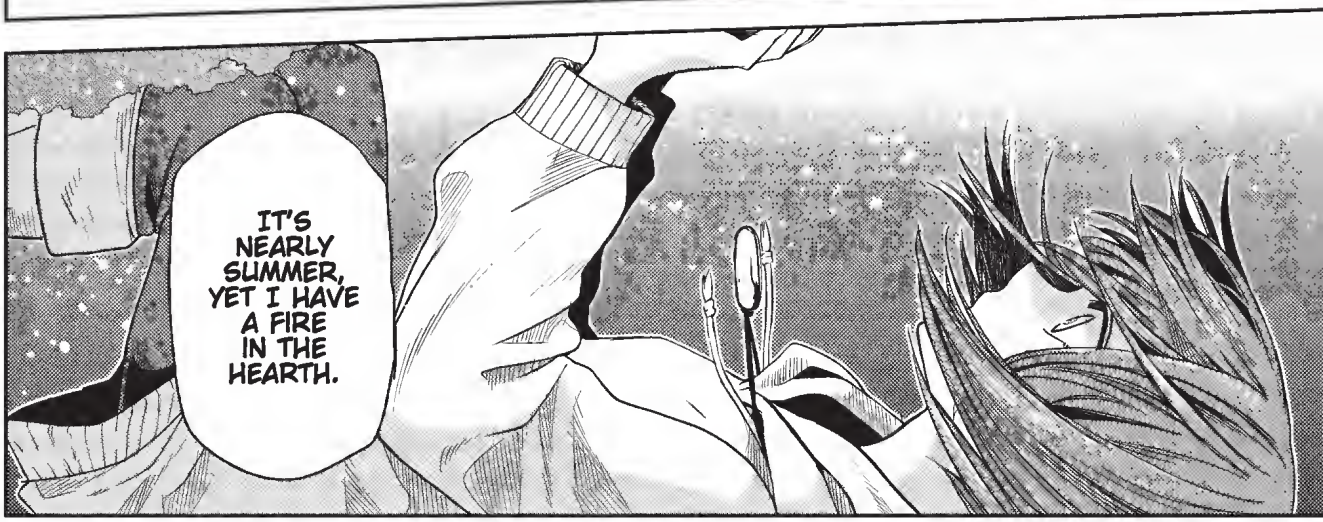

Just twirl in the ring with them and they'll be happy.
I'VE NEVER DANCED BEFORE, SO--!
UM! I-I'M SORRY ...
HUH?!
Dance with us!
Come dance!
HEAR THE SOUND OF THE WIND...
AND THAT OF THE WATER.
HEAR THE SONG.
OPEN YOUR EARS AND LISTEN.
SINCE BEFORE TIME ITSELF DAWNED, SOUND HAS FILLED THE AIR...AND OUR BODIES REMEMBER.
SINCE BEFORE WORDS WERE BORN...
HUMANITY REMEMBERS, CHISE.
AND YOUR BODY WILL KNOW WHAT TO DO.
OPEN YOUR EARS TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS, REACH OUT YOUR HANDS...
MAGIC IS MUCH THE SAME.


NNNH
...
NO MORE...
Ha ha ha!
CHATTER
CHATTER
No human can keep up with that..
I WONDER...
WHAT HE WOULD SAY IF HE COULD SEE ALL THIS?
PLISH


Hm?
Chise?
ELIAS--!
YEAH.
Oh...
Do I hear him singing...?
When did you learn to use a water mirror?
PLISH
I'M OUT IN THE GARDEN BY THE RAIN BARREL.
IT'S WHAT WE CALL LOOKING INTO WATER TO SEE SOMEONE ELSE.
"Water mirror"?

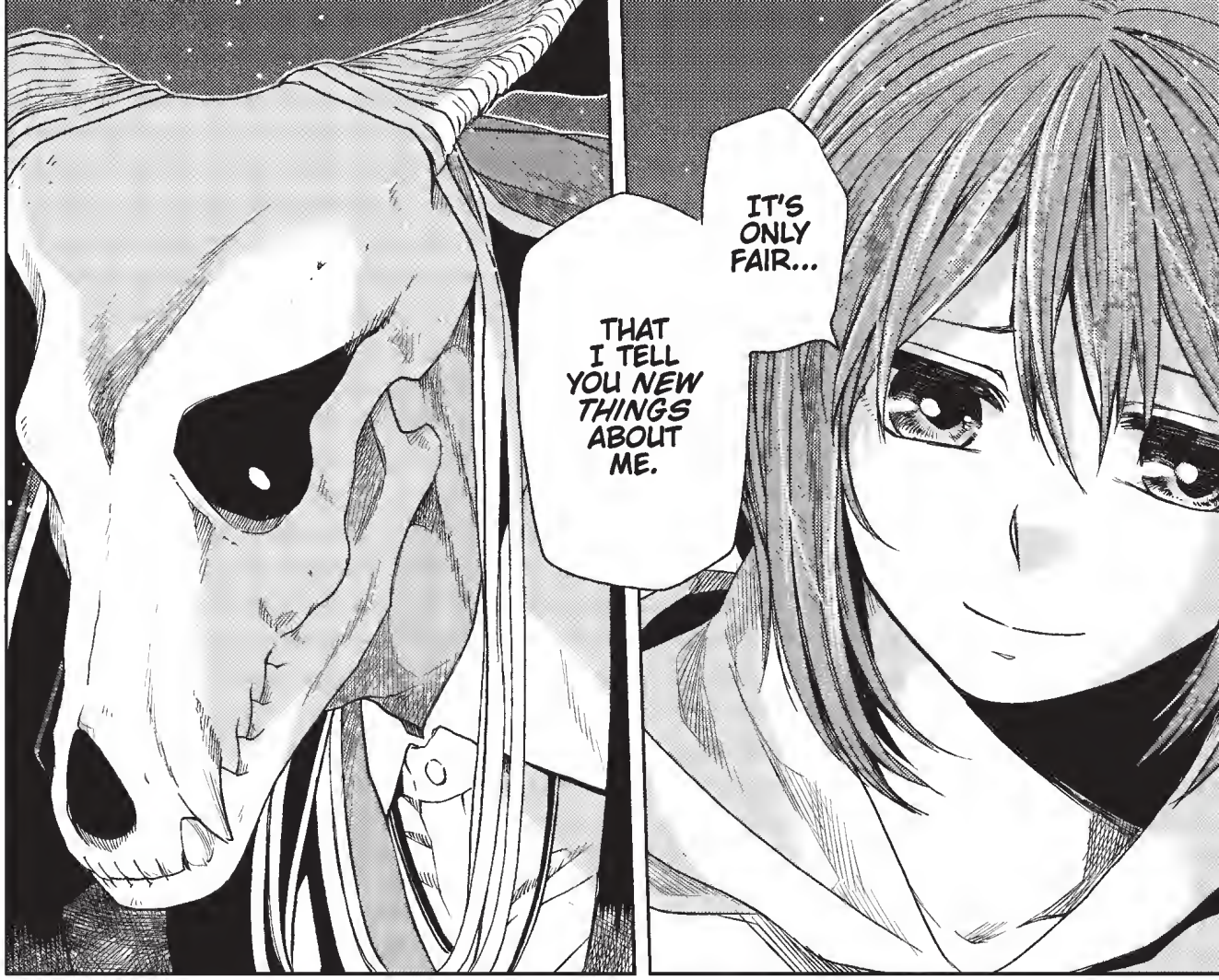

YES?
You look... weirdly *somber* or something.
Did something happen?
Oh, uh... okay.
THE MAGIC OF HIS SONG MUST HAVE CONNECTED OUR LOCATIONS.
WELL, NO WONDER, THEN.
ELIAS ?
WHAT ?!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
You might say that, yes.


FOR SOME REASON I CAN'T DISCERN, THE HOUSE IS COLD IN YOUR ABSENCE.

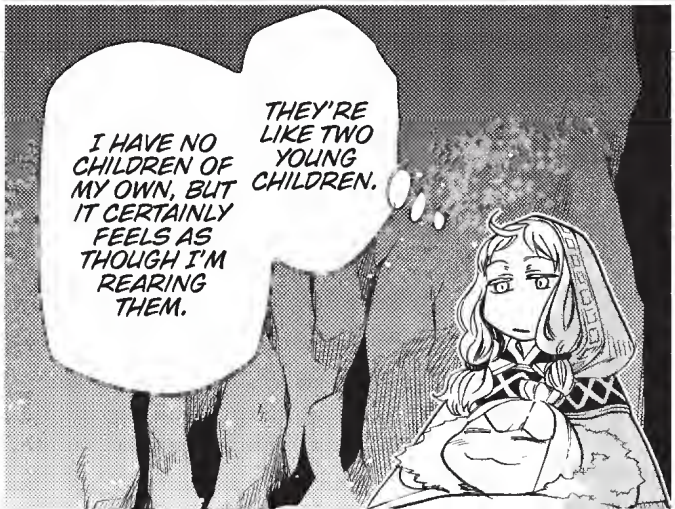

IT'S NEARLY SUMMER, YET I HAVE A FIRE IN THE HEARTH.

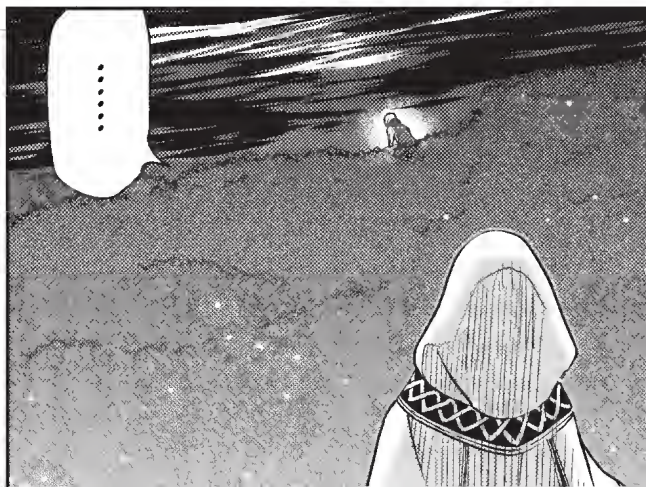

THE FLOW-ERS HERE... ARE BEAUTI-FUL.
I WISH I COULD SHOW THEM TO YOU.
Tell me about them when you come home.
!
PLUCK


SCATTER...
Here, have some!
Elias?
YES?
I, UM... I LEARNED SOME THINGS ABOUT YOU.
And so...
MED-DLING OLD COOT!
!

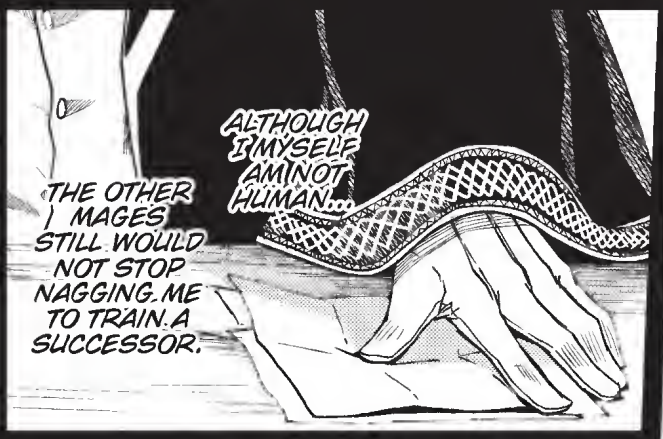

IT'S ONLY FAIR...
THAT I TELL YOU NEW THINGS ABOUT ME.


ONCE MY WAND'S FINISHED, I'LL COME STRAIGHT HOME.
Yes, please do.
Silky seems terribly bored without you here.
OKAY.

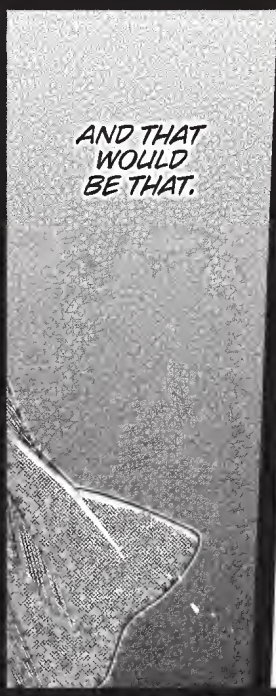

I HAVE NO CHILDREN OF MY OWN, BUT IT CERTAINLY FEELS AS THOUGH I'M REARING THEM.
THEY'RE LIKE TWO YOUNG CHILDREN.

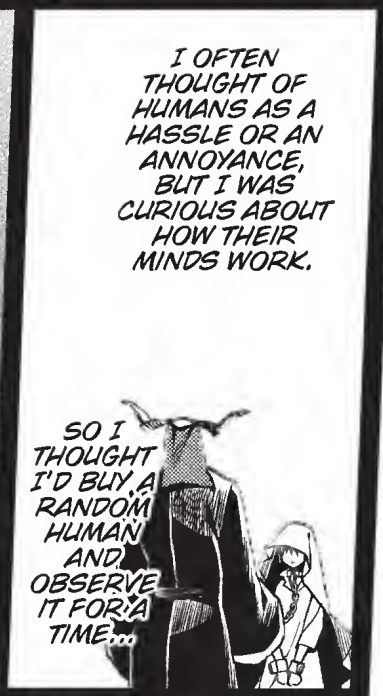

.....

Chapter 18: Better to ask the way than go astray.

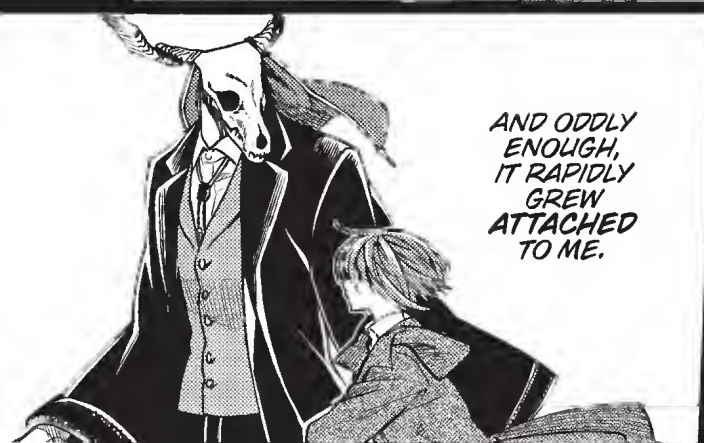


ALL I SOUGHT WAS A CONVENIENT HUMAN TO PLAY AT BEING MY APPRENTICE.











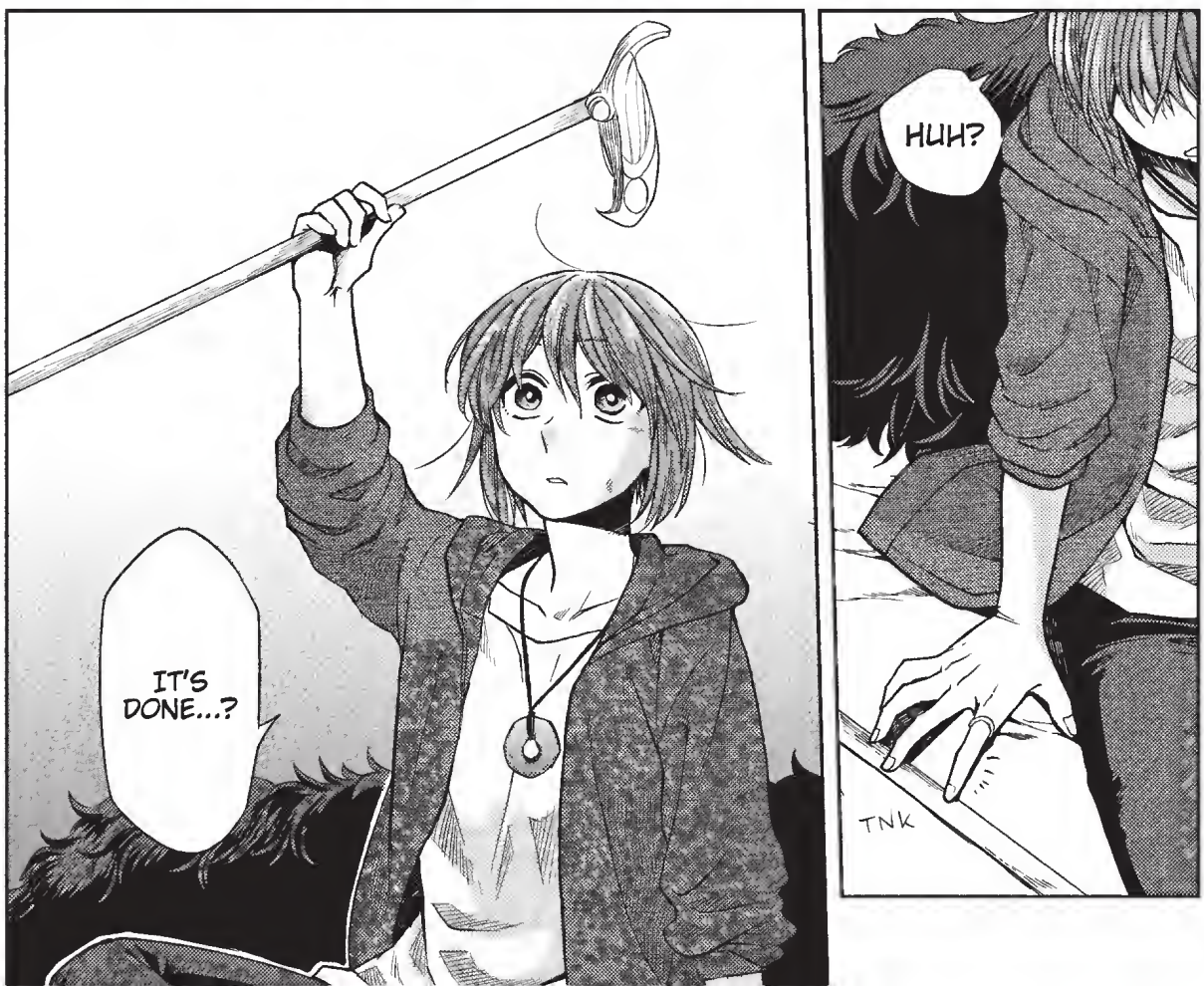

BUT IT...
NO--SHE DOES NOT SPEAK MUCH.
EACH TIME I SEE THAT...
SHE SOMETIMES OPENS HER MOUTH...
THEN QUICKLY CLOSES IT WITHOUT SAYING A WORD.
TWO DISTINCT FEELINGS WELL UP WITHIN ME.
NEITHER OF WHICH I CAN IDENTIFY.

Chapter 18:
Better to ask the way than go astray.





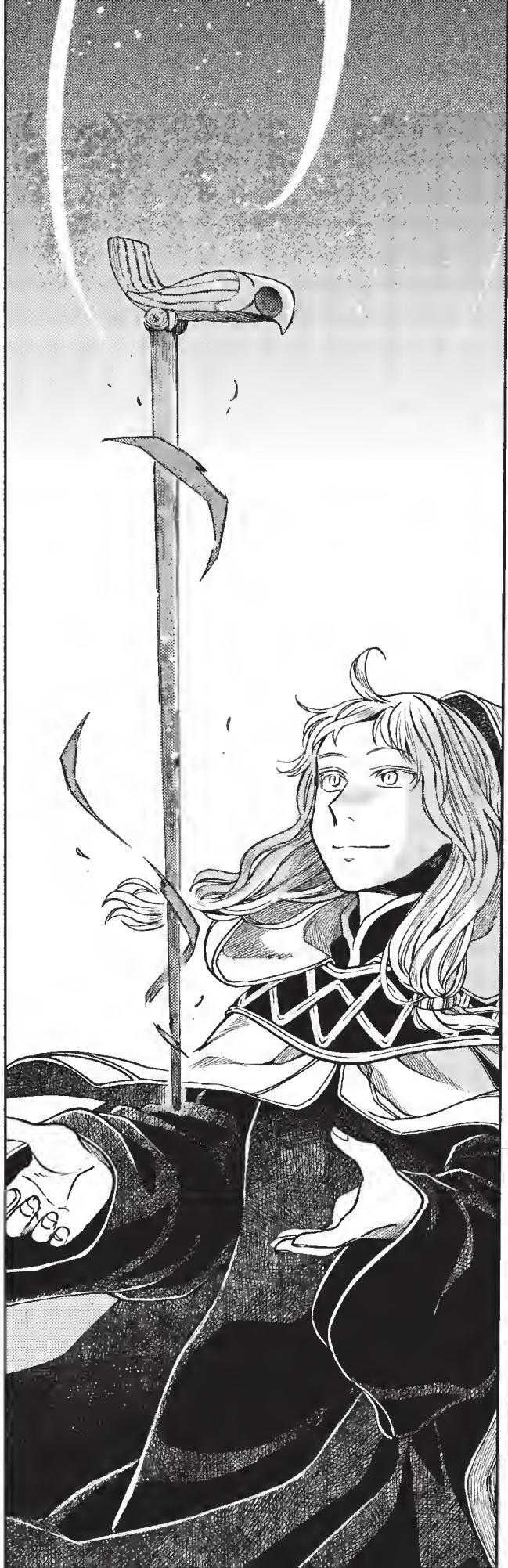

WHOOPS! I DOZED OFF.
ALL THAT DETAIL WORK MUST'VE MADE ME SLEEPY.
FWMP

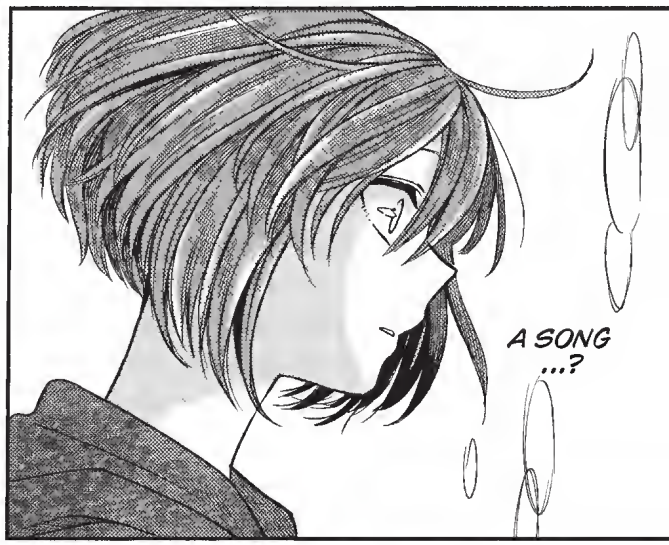

HUH?
TNK
IT'S DONE...?

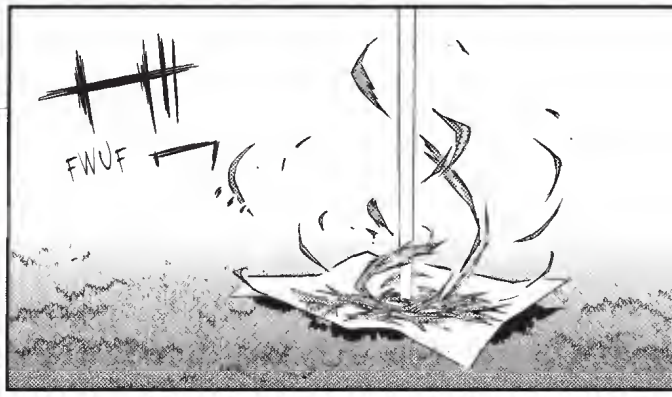

I ARRIVED AS YOU DOZED OFF.
EEP!
MASTER LINDEL! H-HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?
AH! YOU'RE FINISHED?
THAT'S WHY THE OBJECTS A MAGE CREATES WILL ALWAYS BE A SOURCE OF POWER FOR THEM.
YOU BECOME SLEEPY AS YOU WORK BECAUSE YOU'RE UNCONSCIOUSLY EXPENDING MAGIC.
MAGES RARELY HAVE MUCH NEED TO WORRY ABOUT OUR HEALTH.
BECAUSE WE DRAW IN MAGICAL ENERGY FROM THE AIR AROUND US...
BUT THEN THERE'S YOU, STUBBORN CHILD.
URK...!
JUST LIKE ANY OTHER. FOOD AND REST WILL ALLOW YOUR BODY TO GENERATE IT-- OR TO BECOME STRONG ENOUGH TO ABSORB IT-- JUST AS IT MAKES BLOOD.
MAGIC IS AN ENERGY WITHIN YOUR BODY...
SO THAT'S WHAT SIMON MEANT...


HAS AINSWORTH NOT TAUGHT YOU MUCH ABOUT MAGIC YET?
WELL... IT'S REALLY MY FAULT FOR NOT ASKING HIM.
I DIDN'T WANT TO BOTHER HIM...
SO I'VE JUST BEEN LOOKING STUFF UP IN HIS BOOKS.
FLICK
CARING FOR THE YOUNG DOES NOT COUNT AS "BOTHER"!
MAKE HIM FUSS OVER YOU!
BESIDES, HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW MUCH TROUBLE HE CAUSED FOR ME?!
HE TRIED FOR YEARS WITHOUT EVER LEARNING TO SKI! HE ALWAYS BURNED THE STEW! HE NEVER LEARNED TO MODERATE HIS STRENGTH, AND HE COULDN'T TEND A FIRE TO SAVE OUR LIVES!
YOU'RE A FAR DEFTER AND FASTER LEARNER THAN HE EVER WAS!
ANYWAY, YOUR WAND IS NEARLY COMPLETE.
LET'S ADD THE FINAL TOUCHES.


I RECEIVED IT FROM A FRIEND QUITE SOME TIME AGO.
A GEM-STONE?
WE WILL USE YOUR HAIR TRIM-MINGS...
AND THIS.
I CAN'T SWEAR TO THE TRUTH OF THE STORY, BUT THE STONE DOES CONTAIN A LIGHT.
IT'S BELIEVED TO HAVE LAIN AT THE BOTTOM OF A LAKE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, BATHED IN THE LIGHT OF THE SUN AND THE MOON.
AND IT'S GLOWING...
IT'S FAINT, BUT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH DARKNESS.
FWUF...
TUNK




A SONG
...?


FWUF

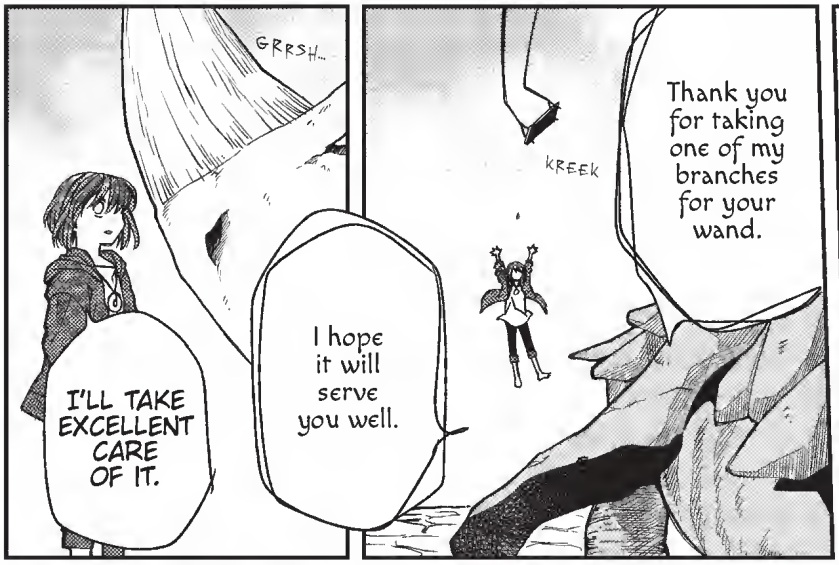

SWOOF


SWIF
SWIF
!
SWIF


THERE. I THOUGHT I'D WRAP A LITTLE AROUND THE OUTSIDE...
AS YOUR HAIR IS SUCH A LOVELY SUNSET COLOR.
I WILL.
SNIF SNIF
TUP...
YOUR WAND-- THOUGH IT'S MORE A STAFF AT THIS SIZE-- IS TRULY DONE.
TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT.
?!
SWOOSH


Well, hello there.
KREE...
WHERE AM I...?
KREEK


It's been a while...
Little hatchling mage.

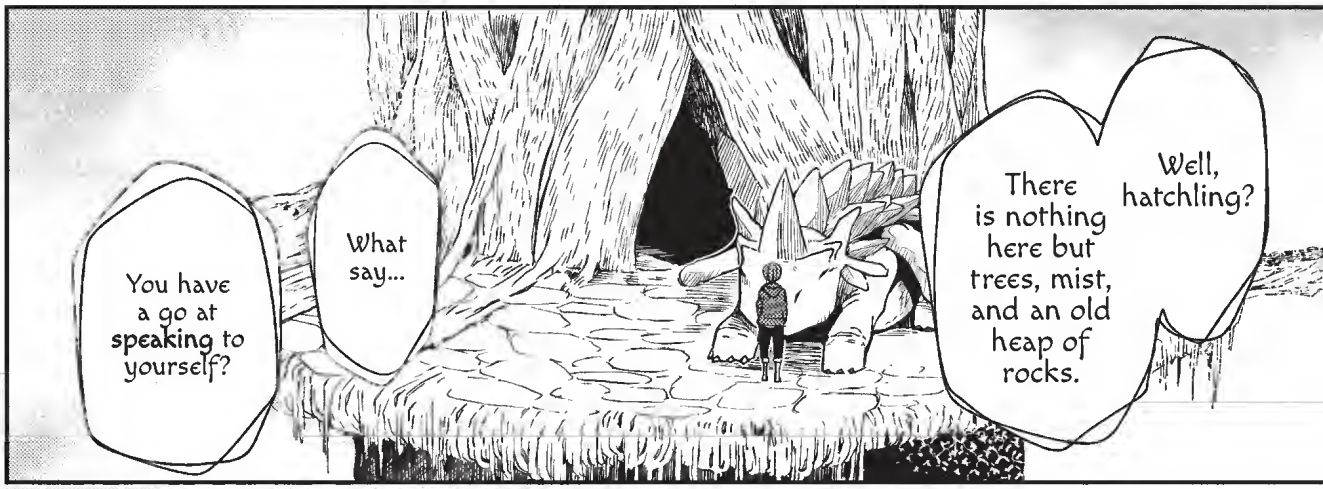

GRRSH...
I'LL TAKE EXCELLENT CARE OF IT.
I hope it will serve you well.
KREEK
Thank you for taking one of my branches for your wand.


YOU...!
GISH...

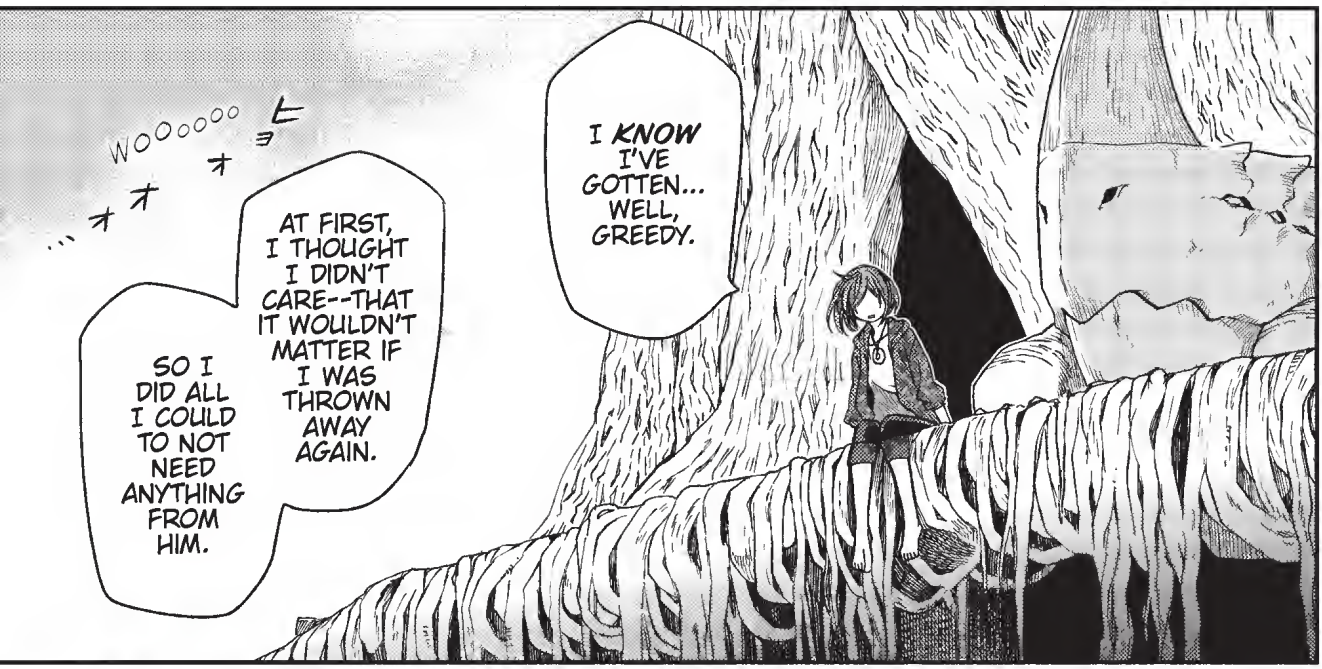

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
HOW COME WE'RE HERE? AND HOW CAN WE BE TOGETHER?


When you accepted my branch for your wand, a **bond** formed between us. I called you here.
GRRK
GRRSH
This is an ***interstice.***
The traveler and the one whose journey is over...
Those who live on one side of the veil, and those who have passed beyond it...
At this **crossroads,** two who might otherwise be parted forever are permitted to meet.
DOES IT LOOK DIFFERENT TO YOU?
I am deceased. My eyes are no more.
I see only through **your** living eyes.
KREEE
So, this is how your mind perceives it?
It's lovely.
KRRK


Your face still carries a certain **melancholy,** Chise...
Although, perhaps less so than when last we met.
...


Well, hatchling?
There is nothing here but trees, mist, and an old heap of rocks.
What say...
You have a go at **speaking** to yourself?

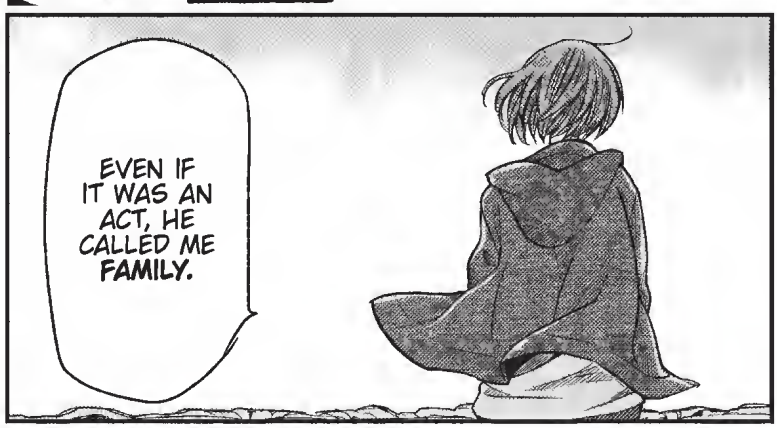

——私は...
<I... I THINK...>
SWOooo
NO...


I KNOW I'VE GOTTEN... WELL, GREEDY.
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT I DIDN'T CARE--THAT IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF I WAS THROWN AWAY AGAIN.
SO I DID ALL I COULD TO NOT NEED ANYTHING FROM HIM.
WOOOOOO

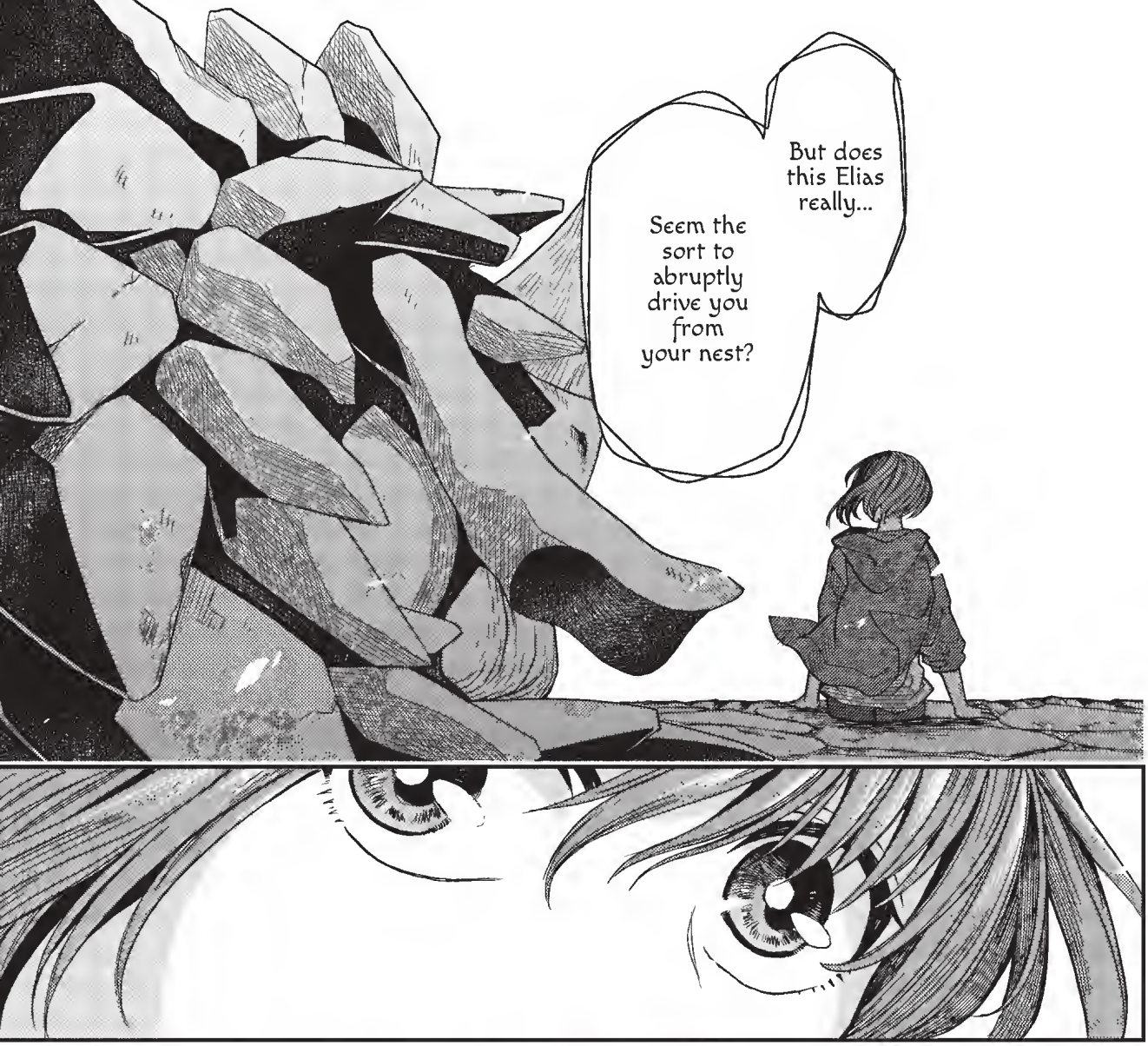

AND BECAUSE IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE HE CARED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER ABOUT ME, I RELAXED.

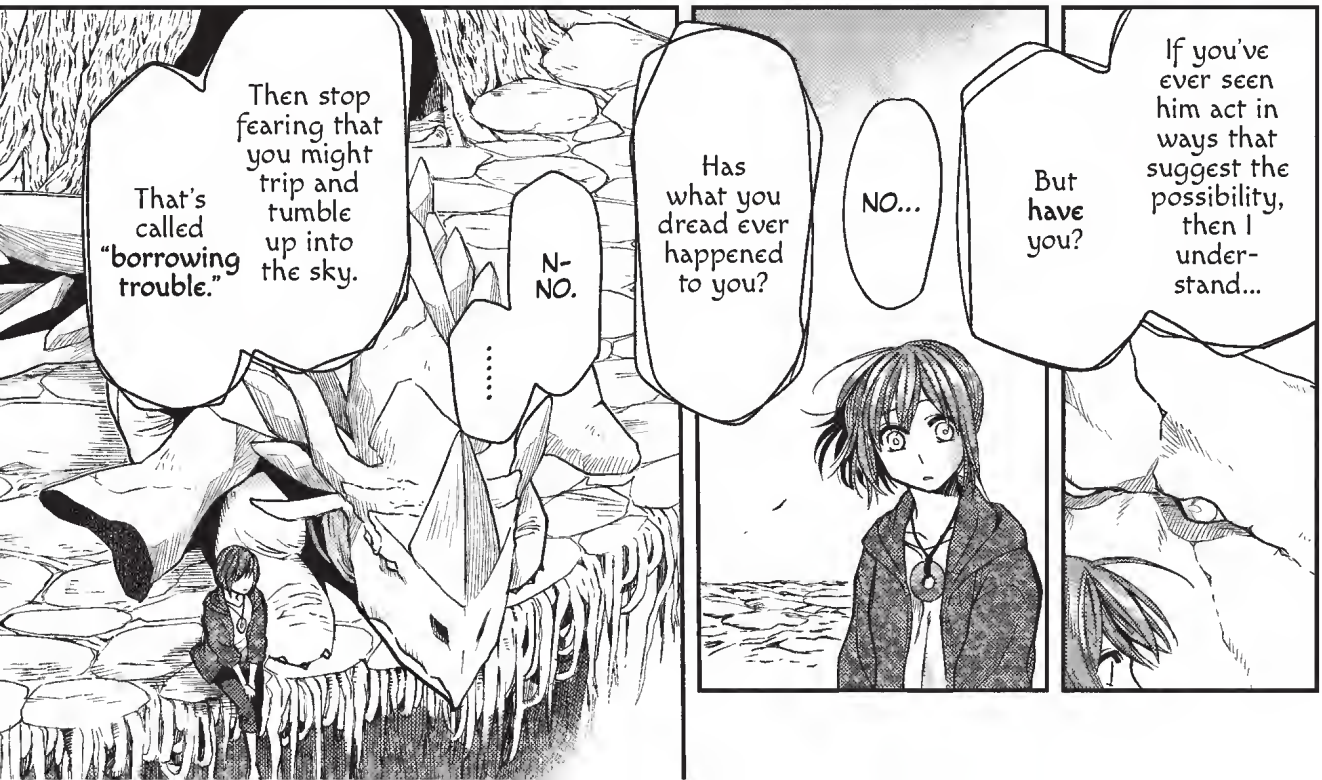

MAYBE I WAS HIS GUINEA PIG, BUT HE SAID I COULD STAY WITH HIM.
BUT BEFORE I KNEW IT...
ELIAS' SILENCE ...
AND HIS REFUSAL TO OPEN UP STARTED TO BOTHER ME.

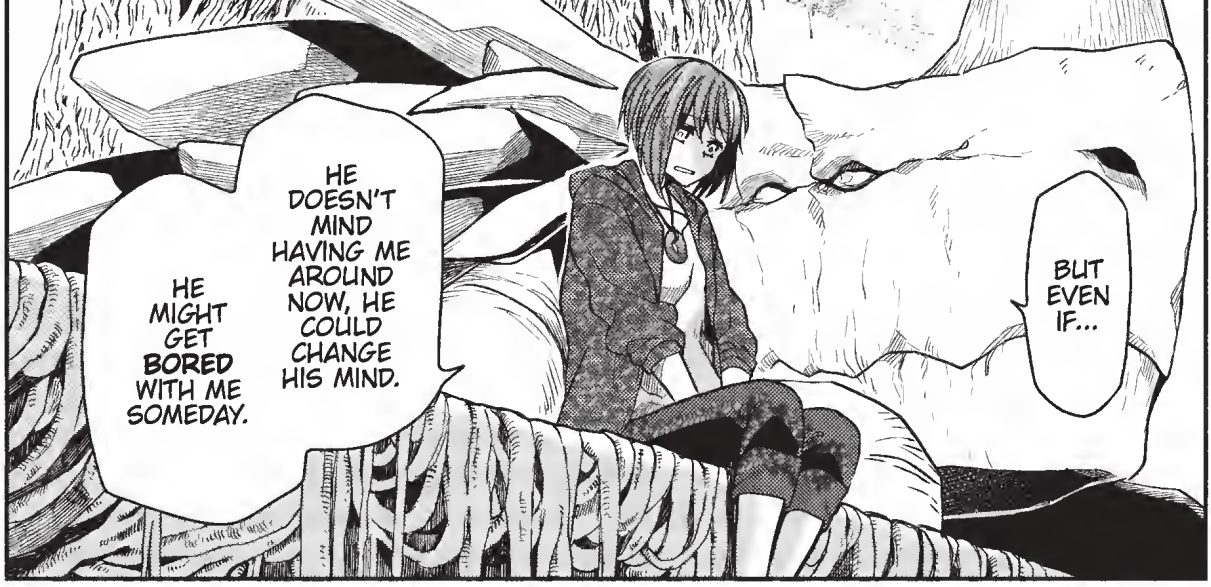

I WAS ALWAYS MORE FRIGHTENED OF BEING TOLD...
THAT I WAS CREEPY OR GROSS THAN OF BEING ABANDONED.

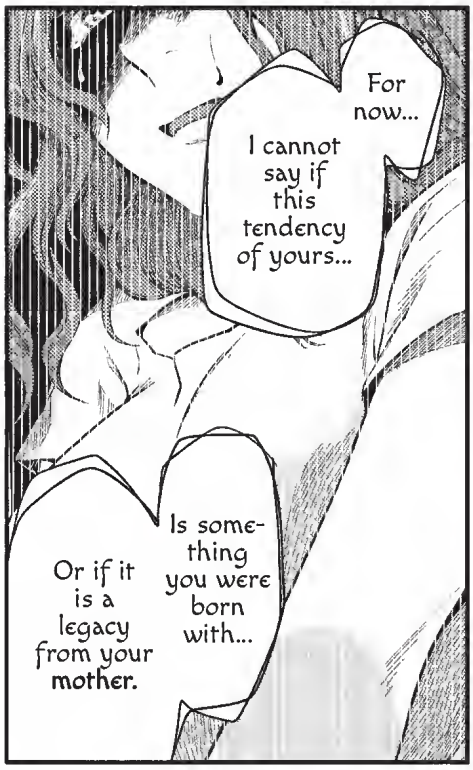

EVEN IF IT WAS AN ACT, HE CALLED ME FAMILY.


I...WISH I COULD HAVE STAYED DETACHED.
I STARTED FEELING LONELY...
AND SCARED.
.....
GRSH...
THEN I WOULDN'T BE DISSATISFIED WITH HOW THINGS ARE NOW...
AND I WOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF GETTING KICKED OUT. I'D KNOW I COULD JUST MOVE ON.
.....
I beg your pardon. I know it's **gauche** to respond when someone is speaking aloud to themselves...
...?

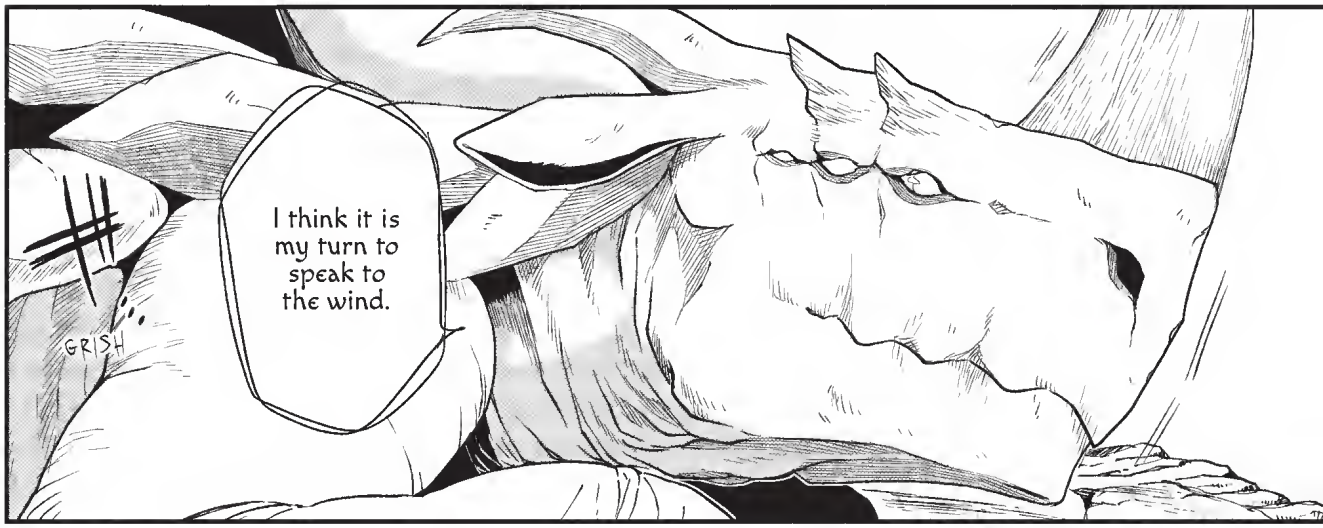

But does this Elias really...
Seem the sort to abruptly drive you from your nest?


If you've ever seen him act in ways that suggest the possibility, then I understand...
But **have** you?
NO...
Has what you dread ever happened to you?
N-NO.
.....
Then stop fearing that you might trip and tumble up into the sky.
That's called "**borrowing trouble.**"

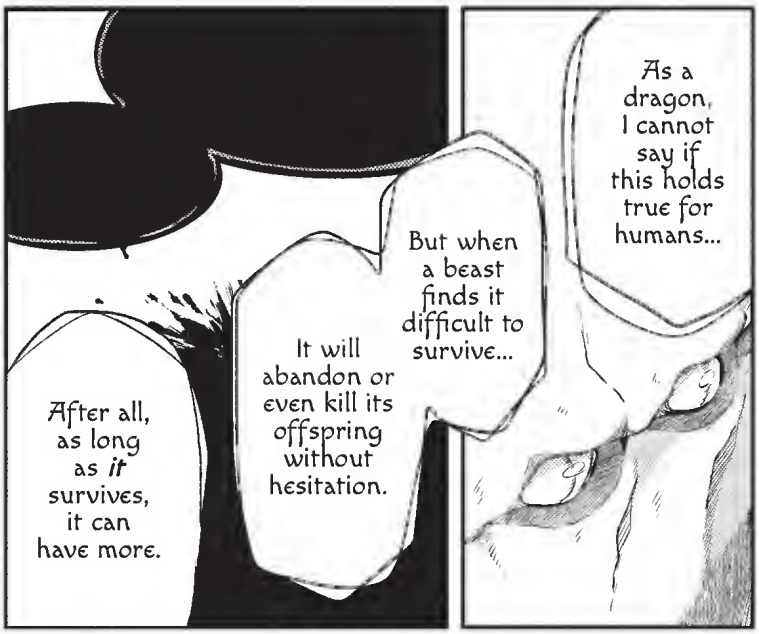

BUT EVEN IF...
HE DOESN'T MIND HAVING ME AROUND NOW, HE COULD CHANGE HIS MIND.
HE MIGHT GET **BORED** WITH ME SOMEDAY.


For now...
I cannot say if this tendency of yours...
Is something you were born with...
Or if it is a legacy from your **mother.**


AND... AND IF EVEN ELIAS DIDN'T NEED ME ANYMORE, I--
Why must you always--
No.

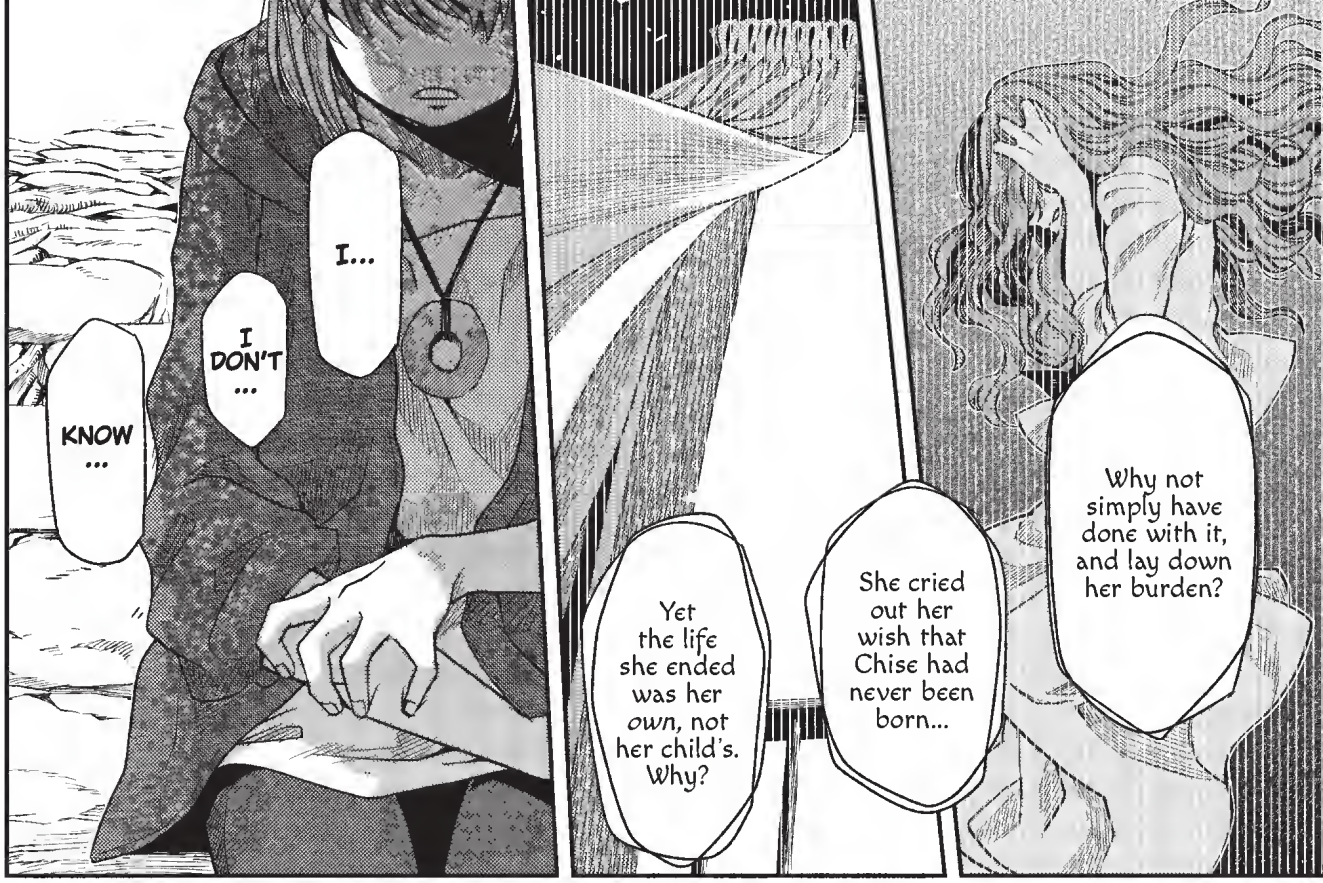

I think it is my turn to speak to the wind.
GRISH

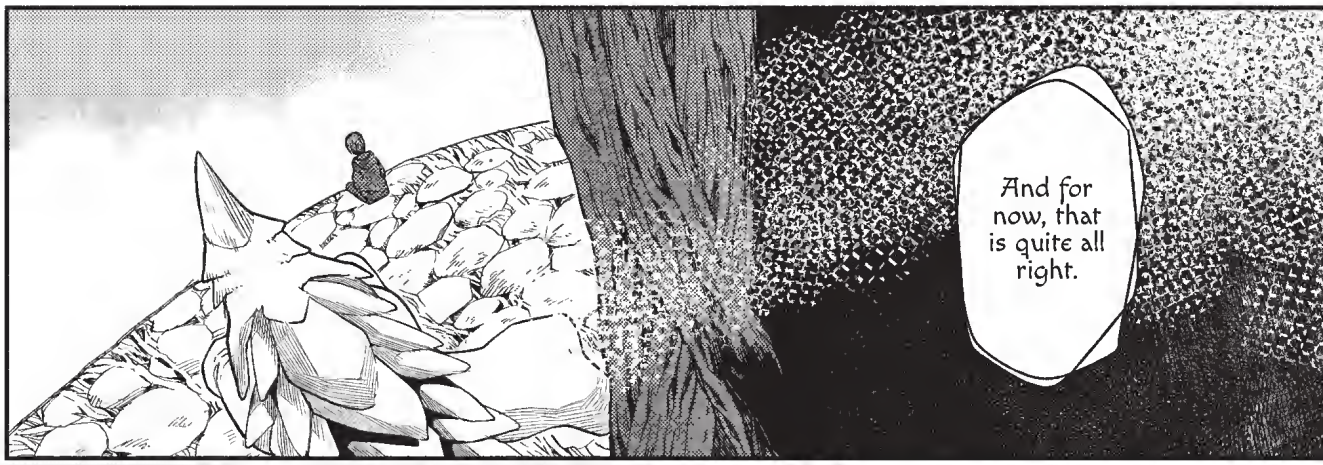

I am grateful to the parents of this young hatchling called Chise.

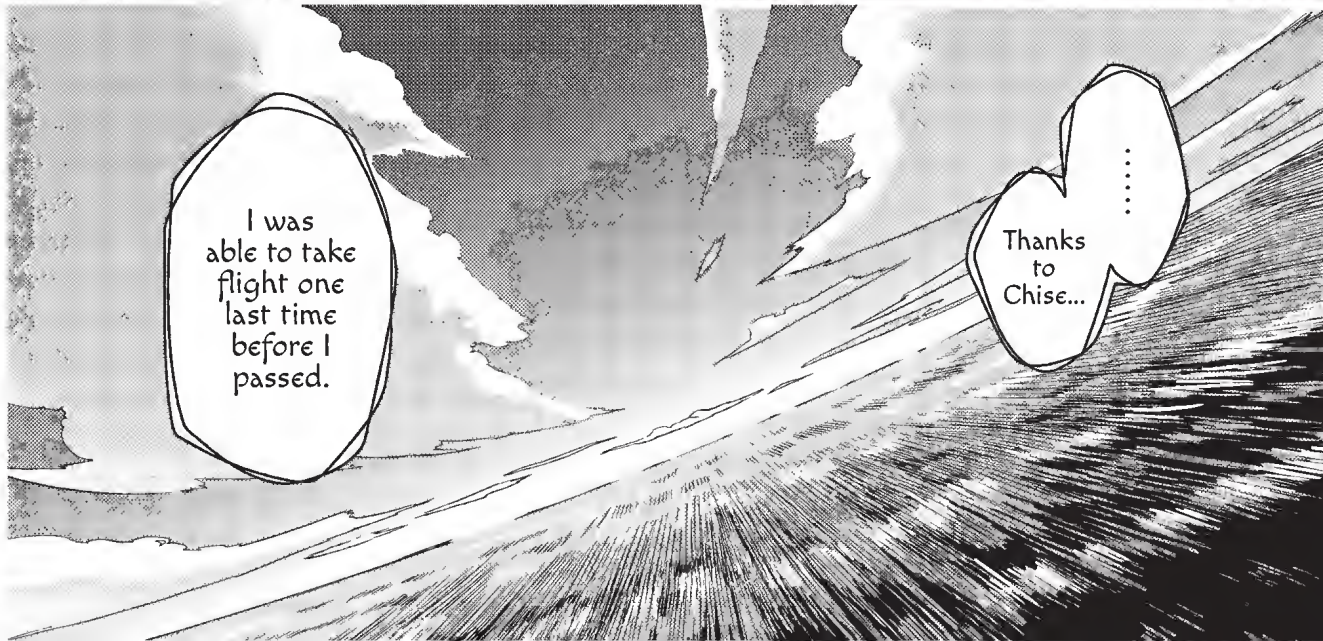

After all, as long as it survives, it can have more.
It will abandon or even kill its offspring without hesitation.
But when a beast finds it difficult to survive...
As a dragon, I cannot say if this holds true for humans...


WHA ...?


Why might that have been?
Yet Chise's mother took her hands from her child's throat.


I...
I DON'T ...
KNOW ...
Why not simply have done with it, and lay down her burden?
She cried out her wish that Chise had never been born...
Yet the life she ended was her *own*, not her child's. Why?


And for now, that is quite all right.


I was able to take flight one last time before I passed.
Thanks to Chise...
.....


I am not alone. Chise has saved many others, both human and beast.
There are those who are finally **home** because Chise gave them a place.
For Chise to have such a low opinion of herself...
For her to truly believe she could be abandoned at any time...
Is to say that those she helped and saved are worth even *less*.
I DON'T --!
IT... IT'S NOT...
UM...
IT'S NOT LIKE I DELIBERATELY DID ANY OF THAT STUFF. IT JUST... HAPPENED.

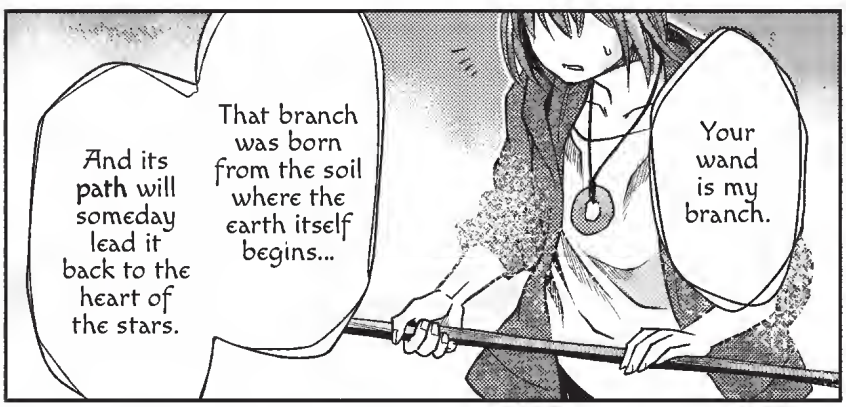

Therefore, your parents have my **gratitude** for choosing to preserve your life...
And I wish that you might take a little more **pride** in yourself.
Pride for having the **strength**...
To reach out your hand to another.
And yet...
A few kind words or an offered hand can be enough to save another creature.

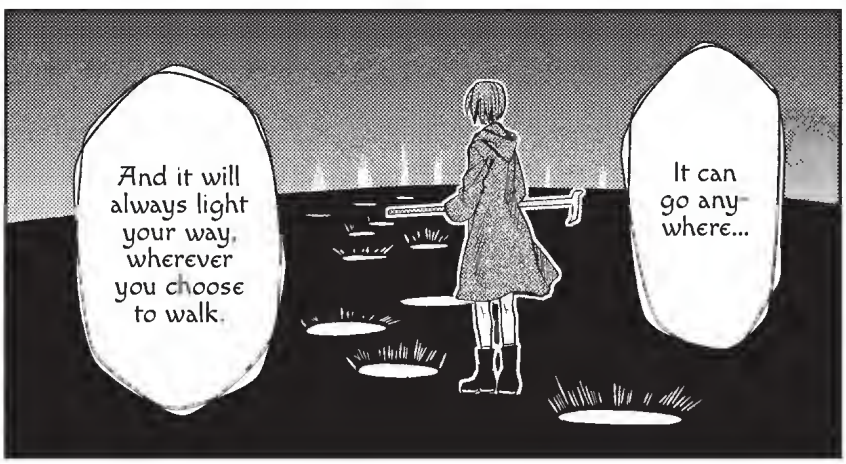

My thanks. It was a gift from Lindel. I think it's rather splendid.
Ahh. You'll say my name now, *hmm?*
GISH
NEVIN ...

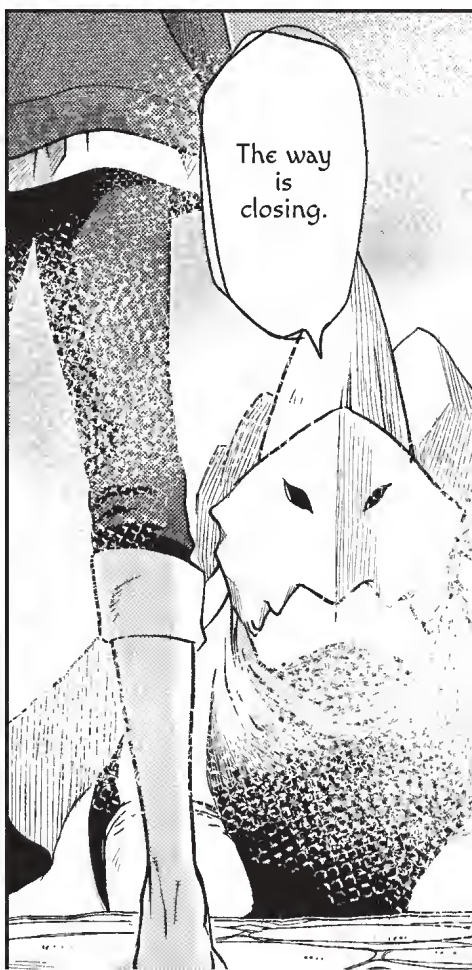

Chise.
You are free.
I... WHAT?
Whether you live a long life, carrying your "curse"...
Or whether you succumb to it one day...
Is entirely up to you.
But I do hope...
That if only for a moment, you might ponder what you wish to do, rather than what others would desire of you.


And I pray that someday...
You will *fly*, in the truest sense of the word, to the very ends of your world.
FWISH


NEVIN ...?
THE MIST IS GETTING THICKER...
SWOO
OOO


Your wand is my branch.
That branch was born from the soil where the earth itself begins...
And its **path** will someday lead it back to the heart of the stars.

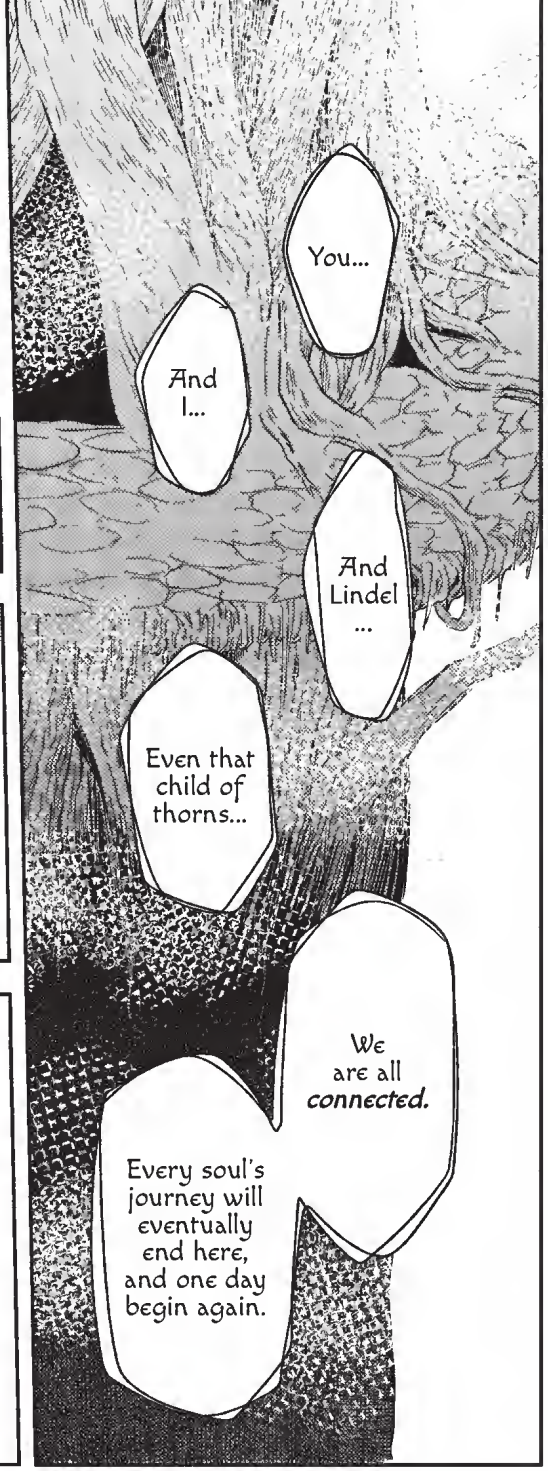

It can go anywhere...
And it will always light your way, wherever you choose to walk.

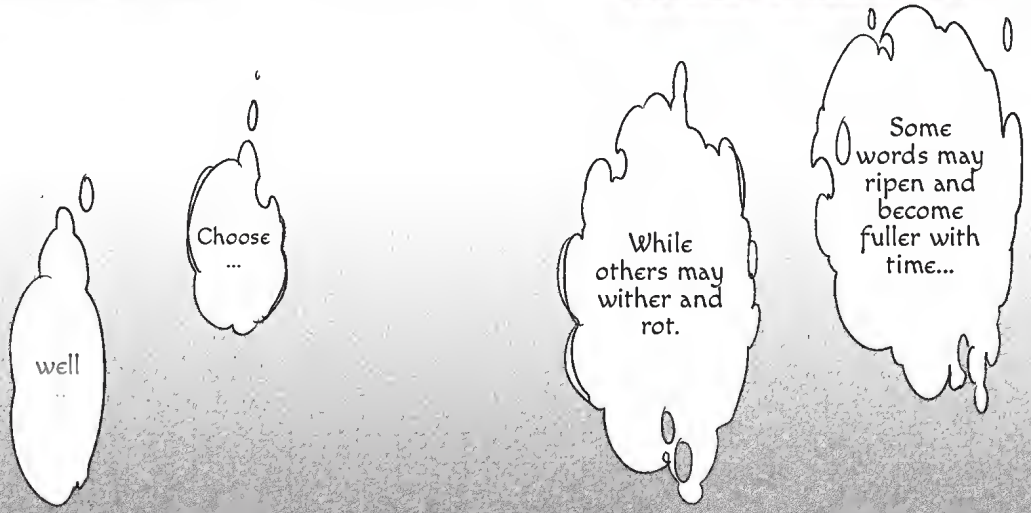

The way is closing.


For now, we must **part,** hatchling mage.
Until the next time your path, lit by the light of your wand, leads you back here.
FWIIISH

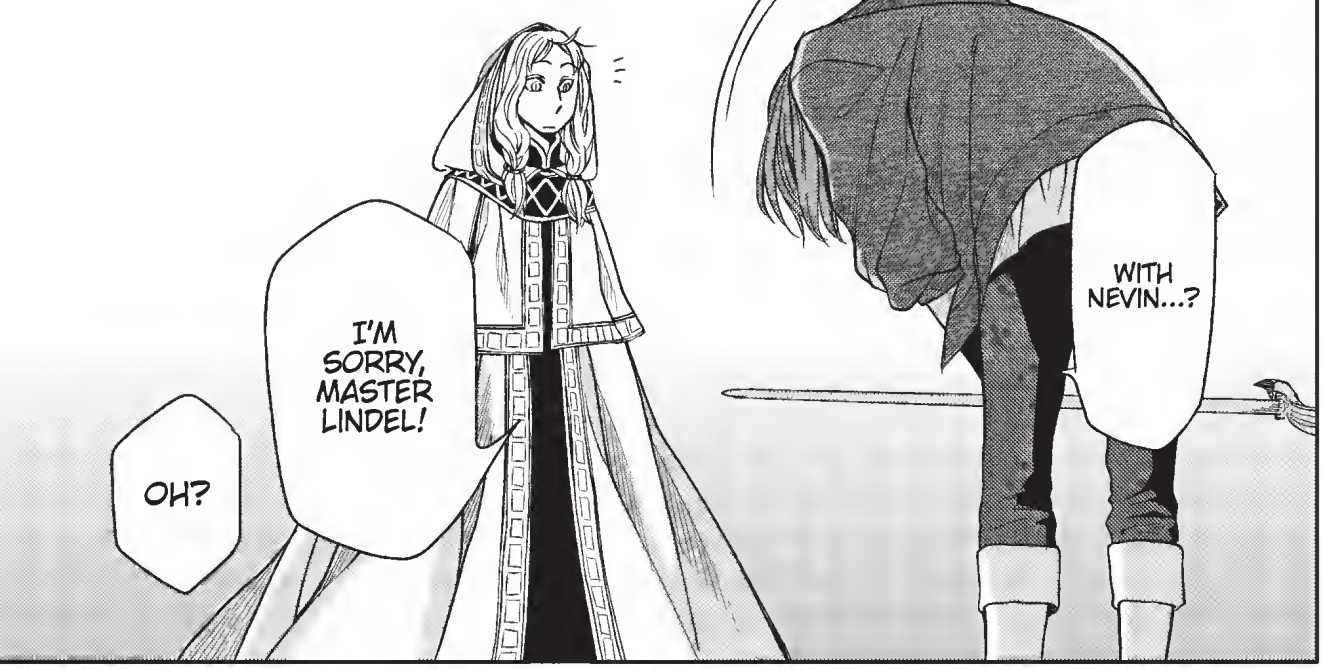

NEVIN ...!


Ah, yes.
I suggest that you give **voice** to what you wish to say sooner rather than later.

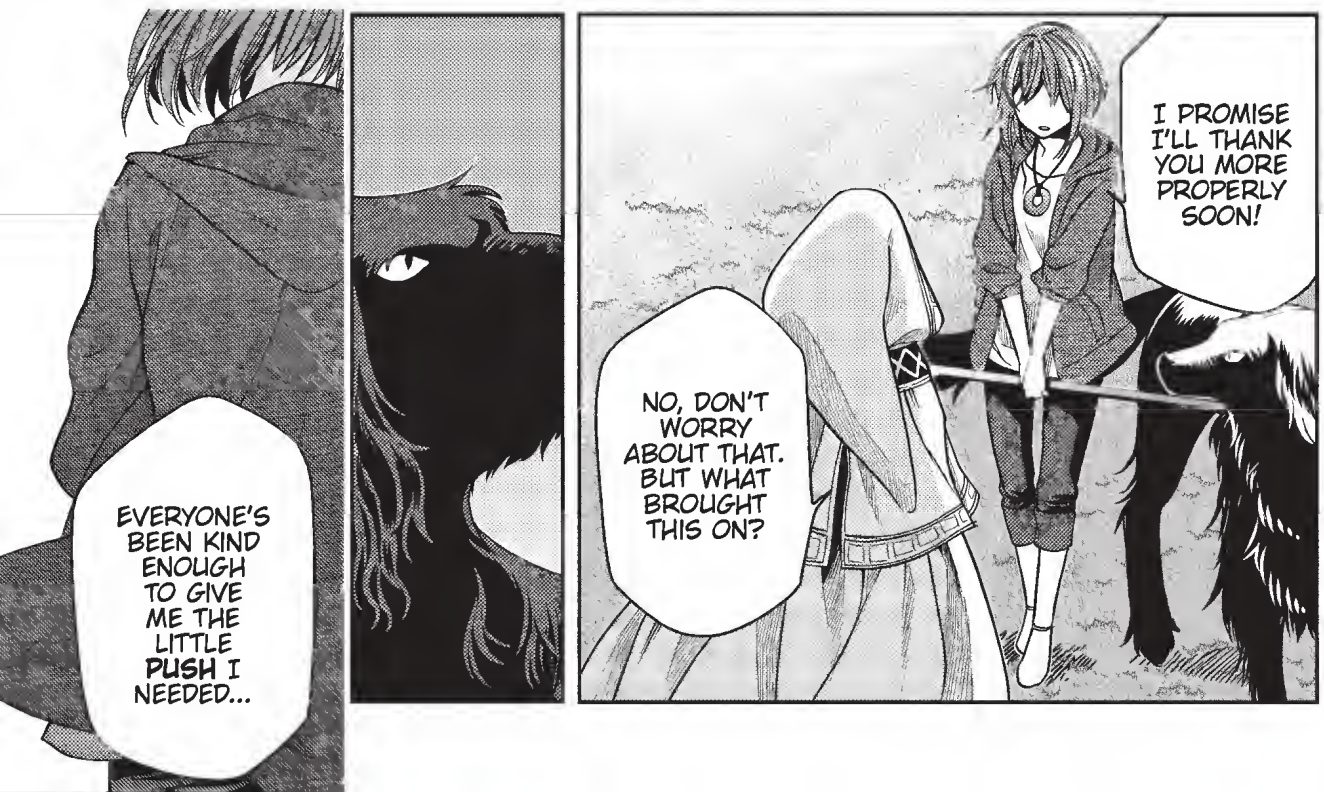

You...
And I...
And Lindel ...
Even that child of thorns...
We are all ***connected.***
Every soul's journey will eventually end here, and one day begin again.


Some words may ripen and become fuller with time...
While others may wither and rot.
Choose ...
well ...


CHISE!
CHISE ...
...SE ...?
OH!
YOUR MIND WAS SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
.....
I... I MET WITH NEVIN.


WITH NEVIN...?
I'M SORRY, MASTER LINDEL!
OH?


I REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR HELP WITH MY WAND, AND THAT YOU LET ME STAY HERE.
BUT SOMETHING'S COME UP! I HAVE TO GET **HOME** RIGHT AWAY.
SO, UH...I'M HEADING OFF.


I PROMISE I'LL THANK YOU MORE PROPERLY SOON!
NO, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. BUT WHAT BROUGHT THIS ON?
EVERYONE'S BEEN KIND ENOUGH TO GIVE ME THE LITTLE **PUSH** I NEEDED...


RUTH!
I SEE. WELL, THEN...
WAIT HERE A MOMENT WHILE I SUMMON THAT YOUNG DRAGON--
SO...I THOUGHT I'D GIVE IT A TRY.
CHISE?
THNK
SWISH...
PLEASE ...
IN WHICH CASE...
EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED.
I CAN GO ANYWHERE.


TAKE ME...
TO HIM NOW.
We'll help!
We'll give you power!
BWOOOOO
We'll circle the world on wings of flame!
Let's fly!
FWOOOF
You wanna go?
You should fly!



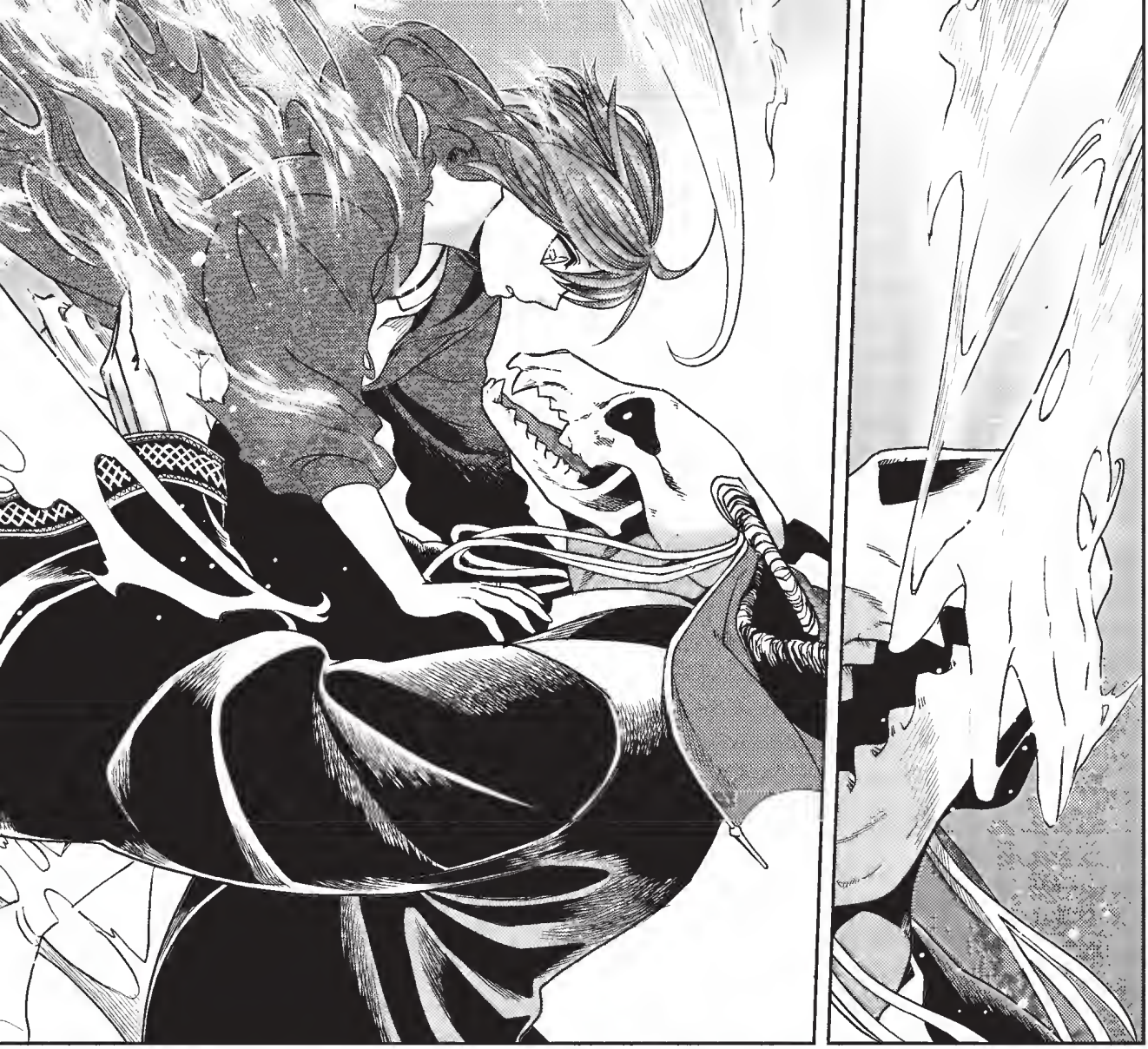

WHMP
STARS IN HEAV-EN!
I THOUGHT HER A QUIET, BIDDABLE CHILD...
BUT SHE MAY BE FAR MORE **WILLFUL** THAN I SUSPECTED.

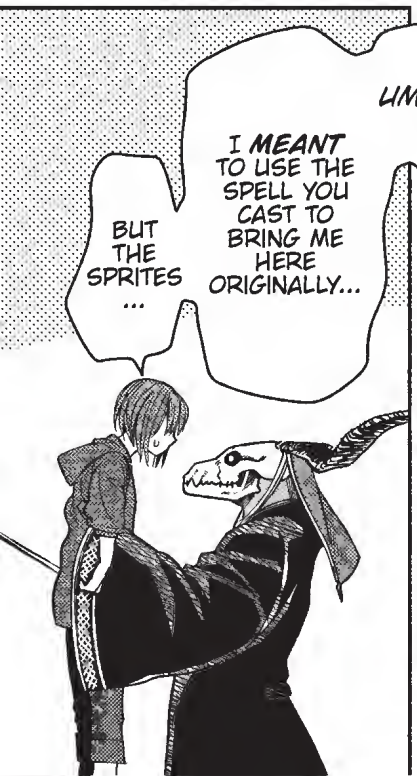

I THINK NEVIN WAS BEING LITERAL...
WHEN HE SAID...
THAT I COULD GO ANYWHERE.
BUT...
THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE I WANT TO GO.
ONLY ONE PLACE TO GO...
THAT'S GOING HOME.


GOOD DAY! YOUR MAIL!
NOK
NOK
NOK
WHY, HELLO, SILVER LADY! YOU'RE LOOKING AS LOVELY AS EVER!
HERE IS YOUR MAIL AND TODAY'S PAPER.
MY, MY! THE GOOD MAGUS SEEMS A TAD OUT OF SORTS.
GOOD DAY, MASTER THORN! AND WHAT A SPLENDID DAY IT IS!


HMPH...
CHISE TOOK ON THE TASK OF WEEDING.
EVEN THOUGH IT'S SUMMER AND THERE'S NO END OF THINGS THAT NEED DOING.
FOR SOME REASON, I'M NOT FEELING INSPIRED TO DO ANY-THING...
I WONDER WHEN SHE WILL RETURN.
FWUF
BUT WHAT IF HE TOLD HER ABOUT--
A FEW TALES OF MY FAILURES WOULD DO NO REAL HARM...
AND WHAT DID THAT OLD BUSYBODY TELL HER?






UM...
I MEANT TO USE THE SPELL YOU CAST TO BRING ME HERE ORIGINALLY...
BUT THE SPRITES ...

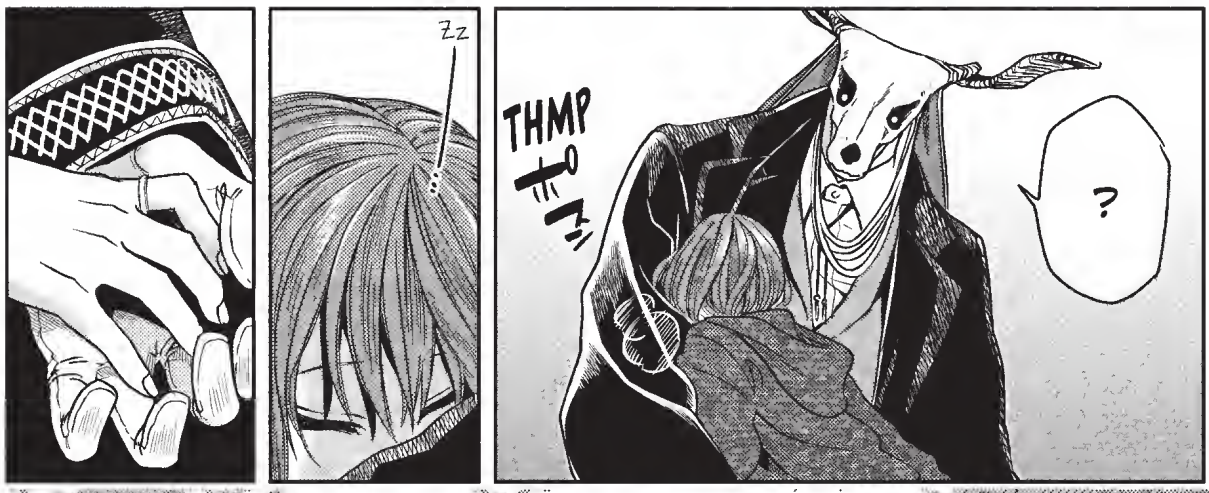

WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT SPELL?!


CHISE ...?!


LOOK! IT'S MY **WAND!** MASTER LINDEL PUT ON THE FINISHING TOUCHES, AND--
AND USED A REAL SPELL TO COME BACK.
SO I ASKED THE NEIGH-BORS FOR HELP...
I-I FINISHED MY WAND, SO I WANTED TO COME STRAIGHT HOME.
WELL ... UM...
YOU DO THE MOST **FOOL-HARDY** THINGS SOME-TIMES.
HON-ESTLY!


WELCOME HOME...
CHISE.
I'M GLAD TO BE BACK.
HI, ELIAS.
STAGGER
UNH...!
THERE, SEE?! HAVE YOU ANY NOTION OF HOW FAR IT IS FROM HERE TO THE AERIE?
USING MAGIC TO FLY FROM THERE TO HERE WAS UNUTTERABLY FOOLISH!
CLING
FOOLISH...
BUT...I HAD MY WAND... THOUGHT I'D BE OKAY...
ENOUGH TALKING. REST NOW.
CLUTCH...
BLIT...


I...
BUT I'M... TOO SLEEPY...
I WANT TO SAY TO HIM...
THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS...

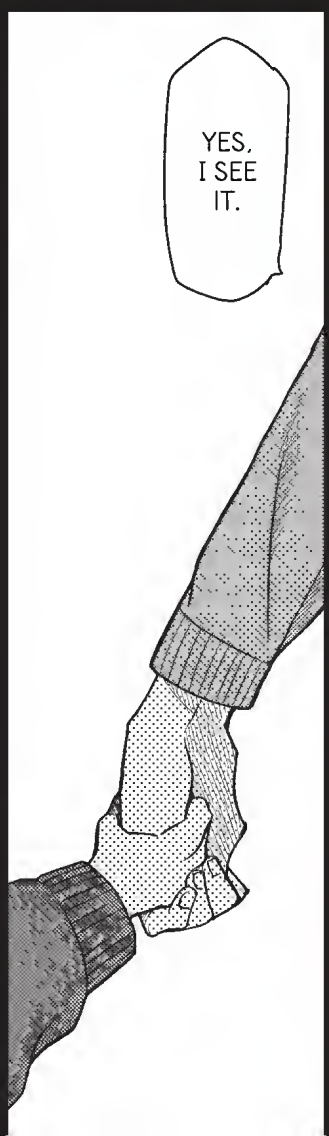

Zz
THMP
?


SHE'S WARM...



Chapter 19: It is a long lane that has no turning.

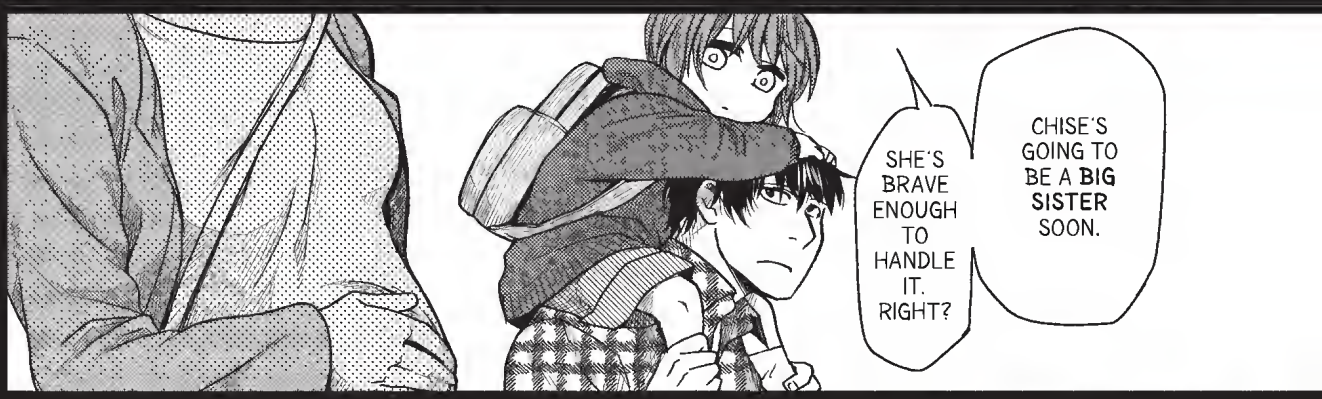




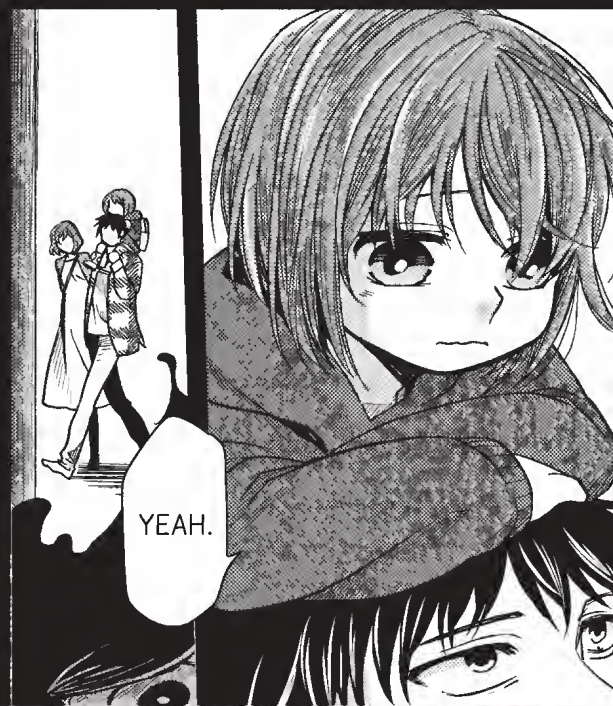


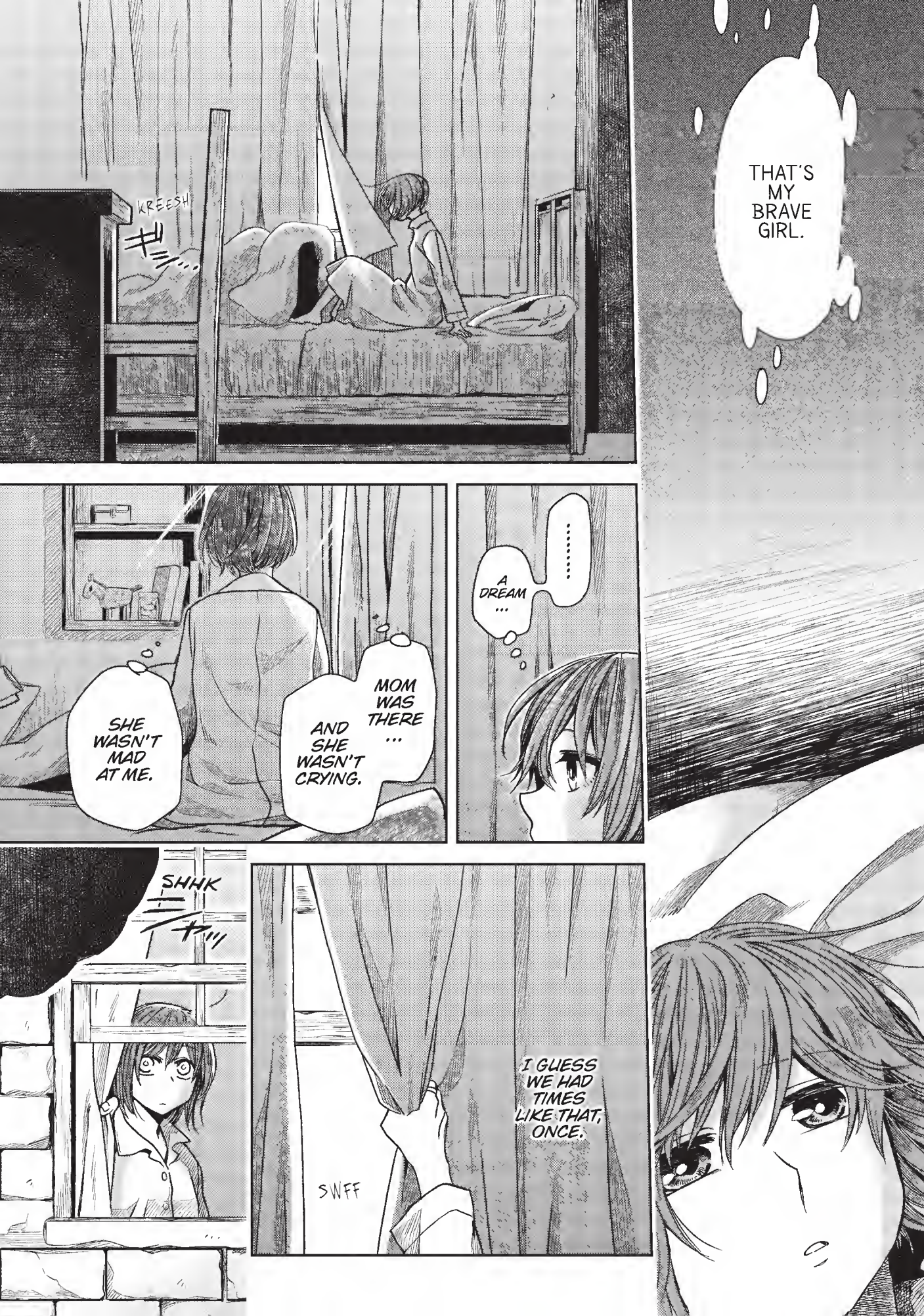



IT WON'T COME NEAR YOU AS LONG AS I'M AROUND.
SAYS THE MAN WHO KEELED OVER FROM **FRIGHT** THE FIRST TIME HE SAW ONE.
HUSH, YOU.


CHISE'S GOING TO BE A **BIG SISTER** SOON.
SHE'S BRAVE ENOUGH TO HANDLE IT. RIGHT?


THAT'S A GOOD GIRL...
CHISE.


YEAH.


KREESH
ギシ…
THAT'S MY BRAVE GIRL.
A DREAM …
……
MOM WAS THERE …
AND SHE WASN'T CRYING.
SHE WASN'T MAD AT ME.
SHHK
I GUESS WE HAD TIMES LIKE THAT, ONCE.
SWFF



Chapter 19: It is a long lane that has no turning.


HEY, RUTH.
MORN-ING.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
BAA.
BAA.
BAA.
BAAAAH.
Good morning, Chise.
FIDGET FIDGET
We have a small problem.
I hope they disperse soon. I'm having trouble resisting the urge to chase them.
UH-HUH.
SO WE HAVE A PROB-LEM, HUH?
The dream you just woke from wasn't bad, was it?
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
SHFL


CHISE!
.....?
I'm your *familiar.* Our bond runs deep.
I expect all these things gathering outside your window are what inspired your dream.
ELIAS!
GOOD MORNING.
GOOD MORNING! UM... WHAT'S ALL THIS?
I'M GLAD YOU WOKE AFTER ONLY TWO DAYS.


IT'S SHEARING TIME.
BAA.
BAA.
BAAAAAH.
SWISH
FLINCH
BAA.
BAAAAAH.
BAA.
BAA.
SWIIISH
YES, LIKE THAT. GOOD. GOOD.
SNIP
SNIP


UM, ELIAS?
ARE YOU GOING TO EXPLAIN WHAT'S HAPPENING?
AH, OF COURSE.
FLUTTER
BAAAA
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
THESE CREATURES ARE WOOLY-BUGS.
WOOLYBUGS CONSUME THE CHILL IN THE AIR AND GROW WOOL, MUCH LIKE SHEEP.
THEIR POPULATION GENERALLY INCREASES JUST BEFORE SUMMER. THERE ARE MORE THAN USUAL THIS YEAR, THOUGH.
ARE THEY NEIGH-BORS?
NO. THEY ARE CLOSER TO CREATURES OF FLESH THAN FAE.
BUT MUCH LIKE WYRMS AND SALA-MANDERS ...
THEY ARE REMARK-ABLY DIFFICULT FOR MOST HUMANS TO PERCEIVE OR FIND.


I DARE-SAY IT WOULD HELP YOU SLEEP WELL.
YOU COULD USE ANY LEFT-OVERS TO STUFF A PILLOW.
TOSS
I SEE.
PLOOF
ANGELICA ALWAYS ASKS ME TO BRING SOME TO HER.
THEIR FLEECE IS EXCELLENT FOR MAKING MAGICAL CRAFTS AND OTHER ITEMS.
SNIP
SNIP
YOU MUSTN'T TAKE CHILDREN'S RHYMES LIGHTLY.
EVEN SIMPLE WORDPLAY CAN HOLD POWER.
That reminds me of a counting rhyme for sleeping.
"ONE SHEEP, TWO SHEEP...
"TIME TO SLEEP..."
THEY ARE OFTEN INVOKED BEFORE DIVINING DREAMS, AND THEY MAY HELP ONE EXPERIENCE A SPECIFIC DESIRED DREAM.
SHEEP HAVE LONG BEEN STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH SLEEP.
OH!
DON'T SHEAR THEIR LEGS. JUST THE BODY.
SORRY! YOU MIGHT'VE MEN-TIONED THAT SOONER!
BAAAAAAA!
ALL RIGHT.
I THINK I WILL TAKE A LITTLE OF THE LEFTOVER WOOL.
DREAMS I WANT TO HAVE ...


WHAT AN IMPRESSIVE AMOUNT THIS YEAR.
I'LL GO FETCH A BAG FOR IT.
FLOOF
OH! LET ME--
NO, NO. YOU STAY AND PRACTICE.
AH! AND...
IF YOU SEE ONE THAT LOOKS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT...
COME AND TELL ME BEFORE YOU TOUCH IT. ALL RIGHT?
...?
BAAAAAA
OKAY.


SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
I MEAN, I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHERE TO START, OR WHAT I WANT TO SAY.
BUT THEN, IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THAT WAY, AND THE TIMING HASN'T FELT RIGHT.
I MEANT TO TALK TO ELIAS AS SOON AS I GOT HOME.
HMM...
NO HELP FROM HIM, HUH?
SOME-BODY'S STRICT.
HMPH!
THE RIGHT TIMING ...
THE RIGHT... TIMING.
FWISH
!
SWOOo

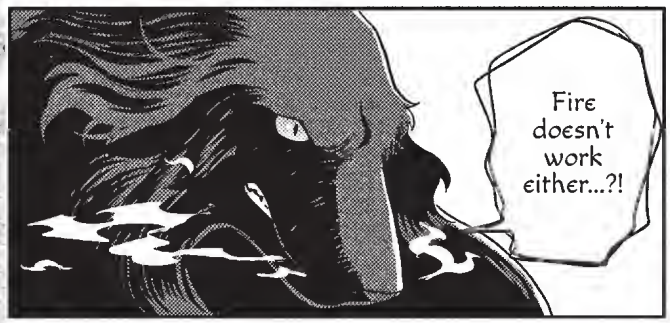

FLUTTER
FLUTTER...
HUH?
DID SOME-THING JUST FLY PAST ME?
THERE.
IT LOOKS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS...
ALMOST LIKE A PUFF OF SNOW...
FLIT
FLIT

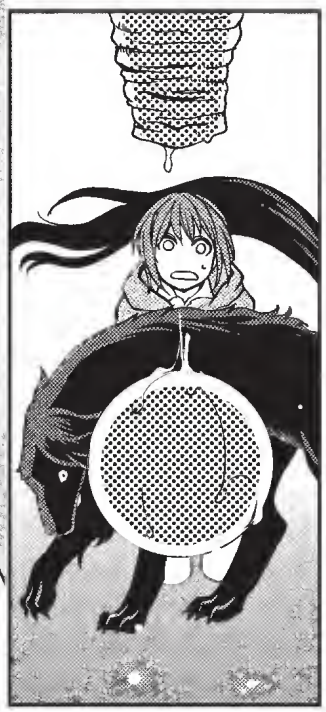

RUTH!
WHAT'S THAT OVER--
BOFF
ELIAS SAID TO GET HIM BEFORE I TOUCHED IT.
KRAK!
IS TOUCHING IT DANGEROUS...?
KRAK!
KRIK
KRAK
AAAH! WHAT IS THIS THING? IT'S COLD!
SNUGGLE
Chise!
THUD
GACK!


WSH
GET ...
OFF ME!
PLOOF
WHAM
DARN! IT DIDN'T WORK!
OW...!
KRIKL
KRIKL
BWO
BWOOF
Chise!

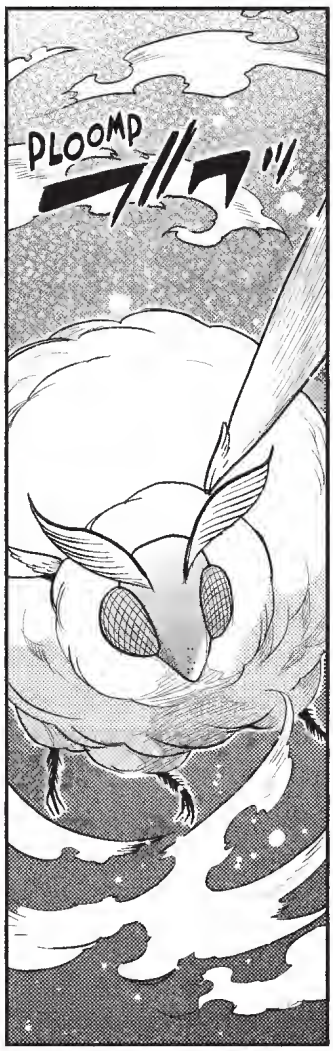

FFROOSH


AN EGG...?!
KRAK

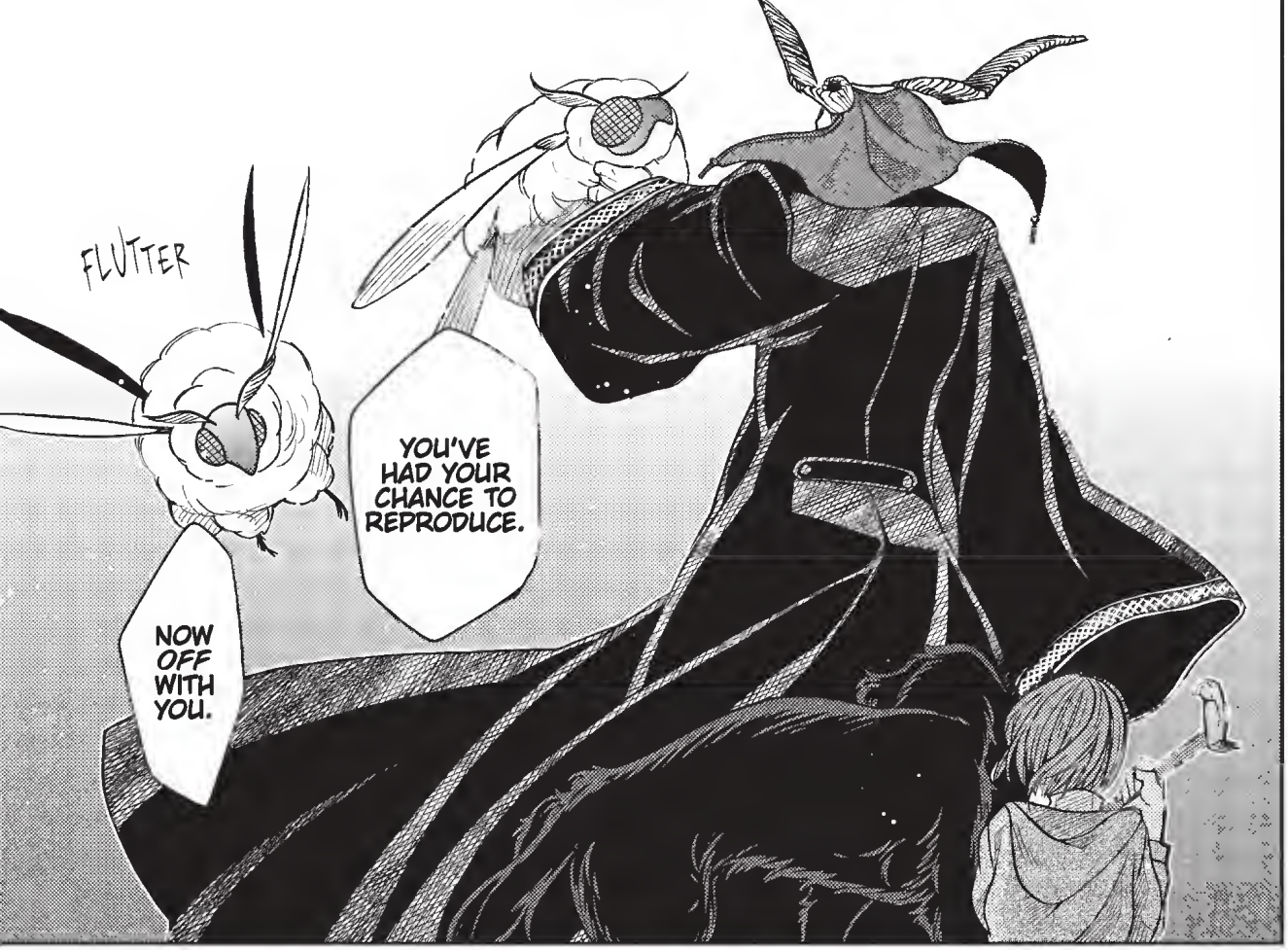

Fire doesn't work either...?!




ZLOOORP


PLOOMP

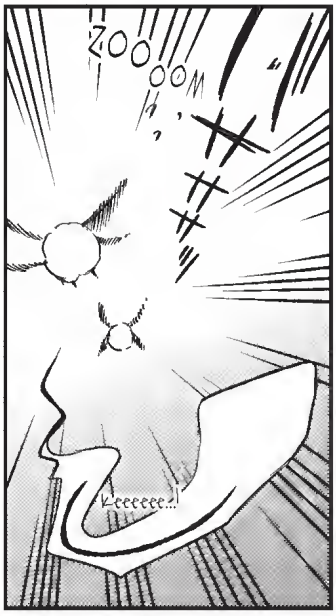

OFF-
SPRING
...?
FLIT
RASH
SWAK


FLUTTER
YOU'VE HAD YOUR CHANCE TO REPRODUCE.
NOW OFF WITH YOU.


UNLIKE WOOLYBUGS, THEY CONSUME HEAT.
THEY CAN FEED ON ANYTHING FROM A CAMPFIRE TO A SLEEPING HUMAN.


KREE...
KRIK
KRAK

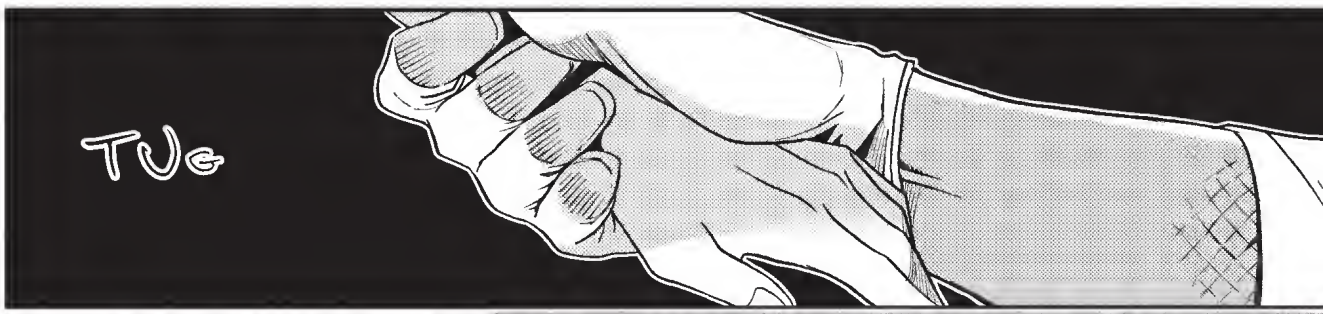

A SNOW-BUG.
Elias!
What was that thing?


ZOOOOM!!
Keeeeee..!


Chise didn't try to touch it.
It flew straight into her.
BAH! AND I WAS JUST THINKING THAT I HADN'T SEEN ANY RECENTLY.
IT MUST HAVE EATEN SOME OF YOUR BODY HEAT.
HEFT
SHVR
SHVR SHVR
SHVR
I KNOW. SUMMER IS THEIR BREEDING SEASON. IT MUST HAVE BEEN HUNGRY.
FWUF
AT ANY RATE...
WE MUST GET THE CHILL OUT OF HER BONES.


!...
BLINK
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
OCHI
WHERE'S RUTH?
PATROL-LING TO BE CERTAIN THE SNOW-BUGS ARE GONE.
I'M KINDA HOT.
UH-HUH. I FEEL MUCH WARMER NOW.
ACTU-ALLY...

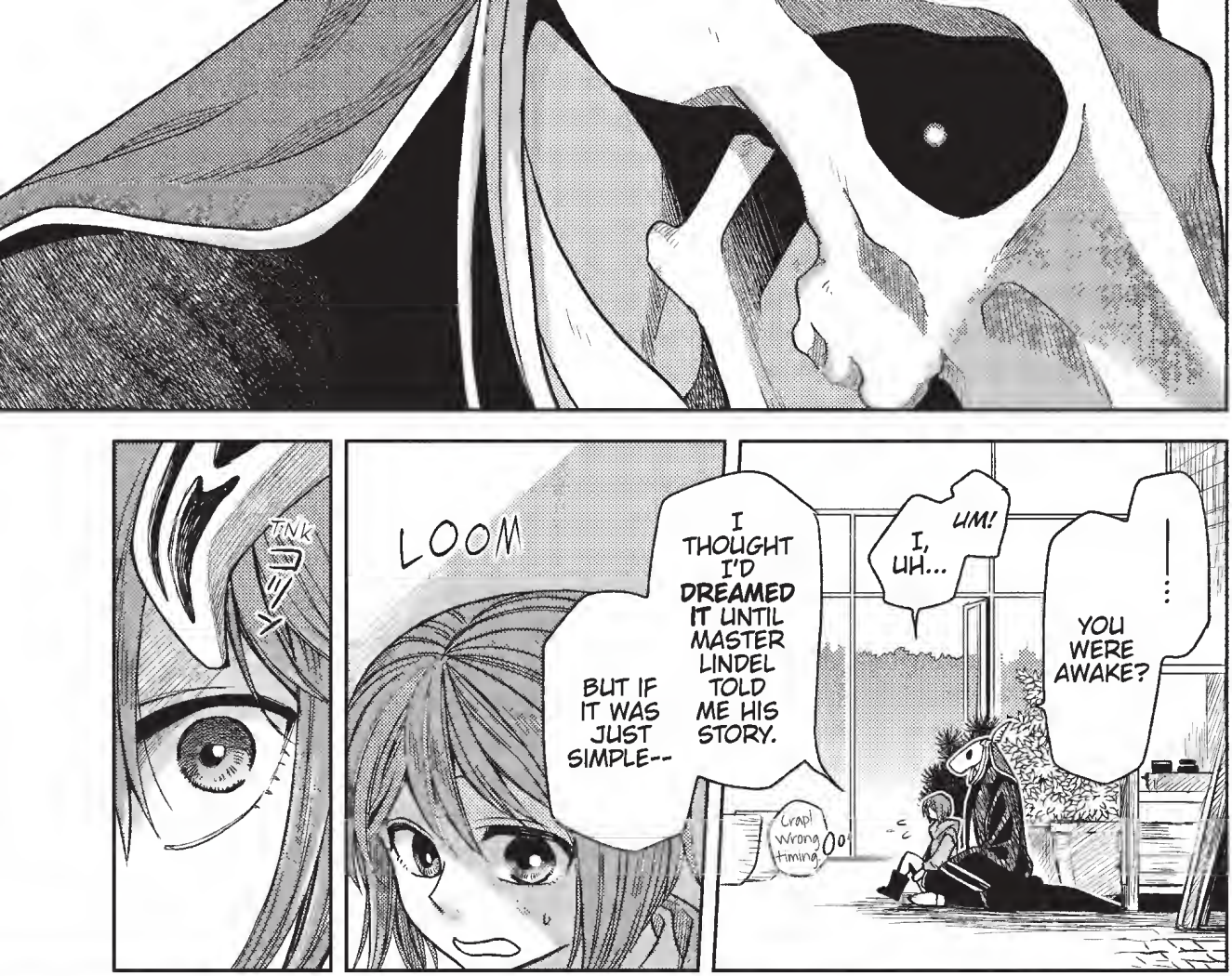

BAAA!
UM...!
BA!
TH-THANK YOU! AND I'M SORRY!
Shoo, now! Shoo!
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE. IT FLEW AT YOU.
YOU ONLY DID WHAT YOU COULD.
SHFL
ER, I...I'LL GET UP NOW...


TUG


WHILE YOU WERE GONE, THE WHOLE HOUSE FELT COLD.
BUT SITTING AS WE WERE JUST NOW FELT WARM.
DO YOU KNOW WHY THAT MIGHT BE?
ELIAS ...?


PAT
PAT
UM...
WELL...
HUH?
SO.
HOW WAS YOUR TRIP TO THE AERIE?
UM...
IT...
IT WAS INTER-ESTING.
AH.
I SAW AN ENORMOUS SERPENTINE DRAGON IN THE RIVER...
AND ELVES CAME TO DANCE...
AND FLOWERS BLOOMED ON THE MOSS.


MASTER LINDEL TOLD ME LOTS OF STORIES, TOO.
AND SO DID NEVIN.
NEVIN?
AHHH.
THAT'S NICE.
YEAH. BOTH OF THEM...
GAVE ME THE PUSH I NEEDED.
.....?
ELIAS ...
UM...
DID I LOOK TASTY TO YOU?

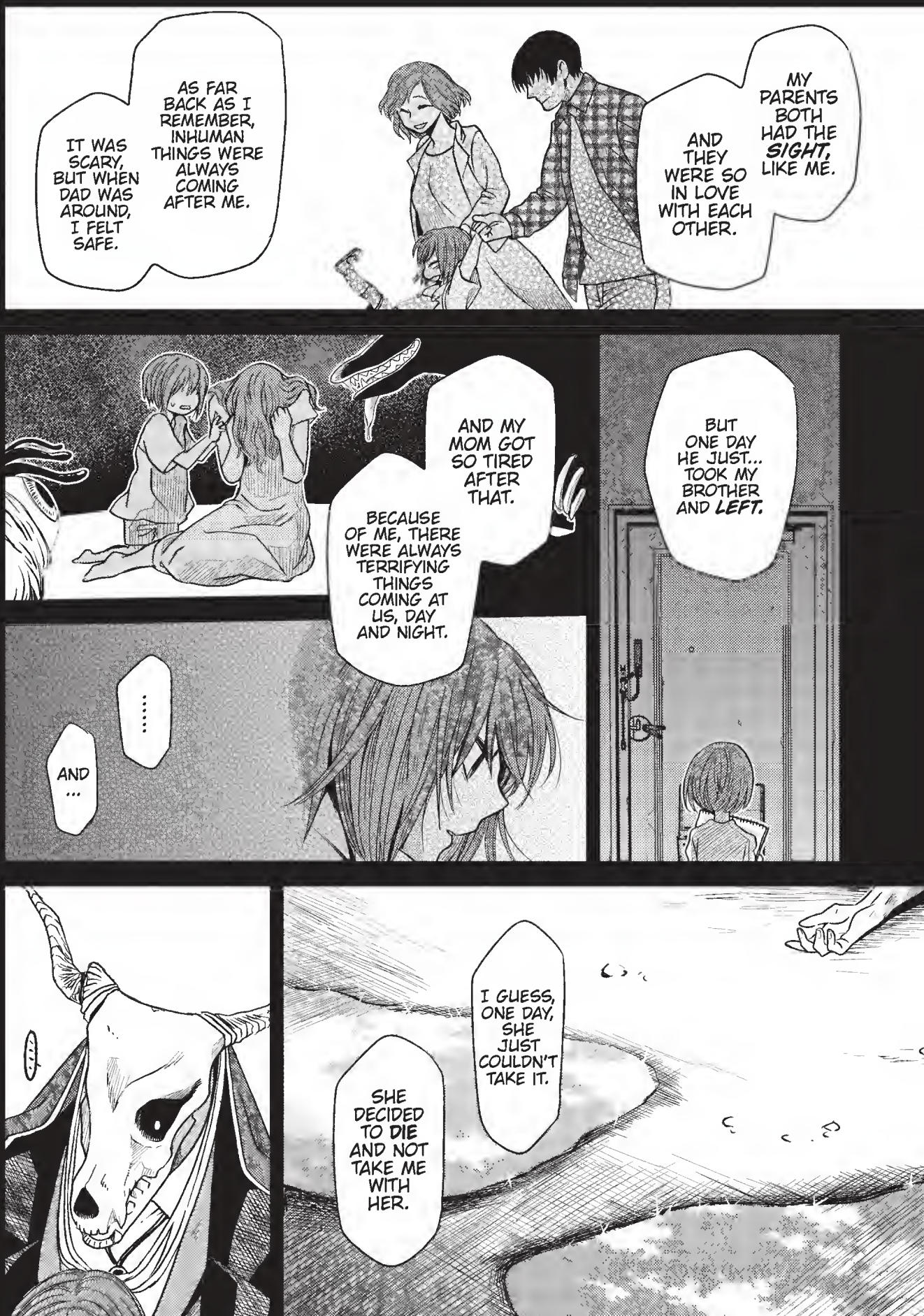

TINK
LOOM
I THOUGHT I'D DREAMED IT UNTIL MASTER LINDEL TOLD ME HIS STORY.
BUT IF IT WAS JUST SIMPLE--
UM! I, UH...
YOU WERE AWAKE?
!
Crap! Wrong timing.

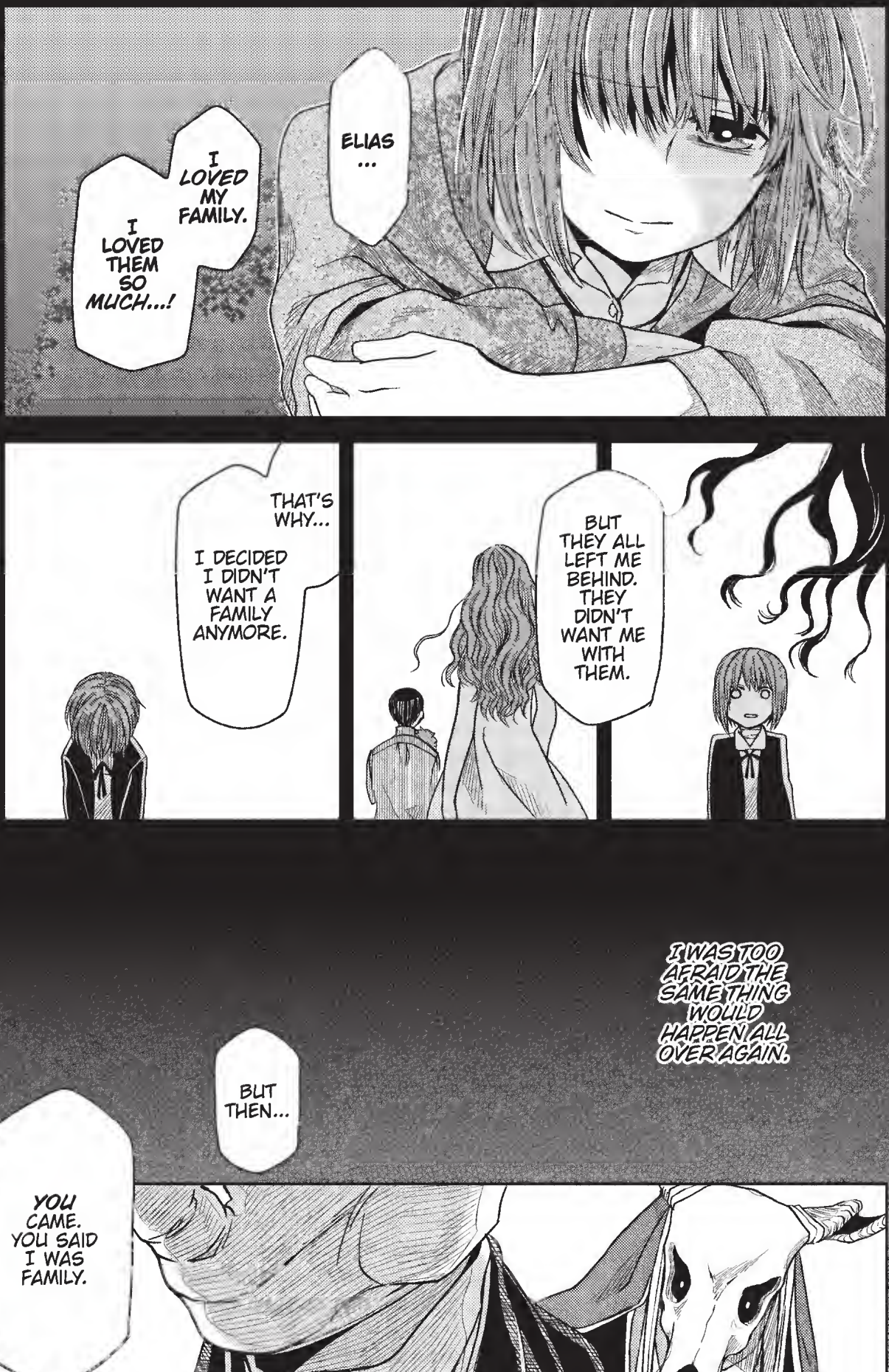

TNK
ELIAS --?!
CHISE!
THAT IS A STORY THAT YOU DO NOT NEED TO REMEMBER.
AM I UNDER-STOOD?
WHUMP


NO--!

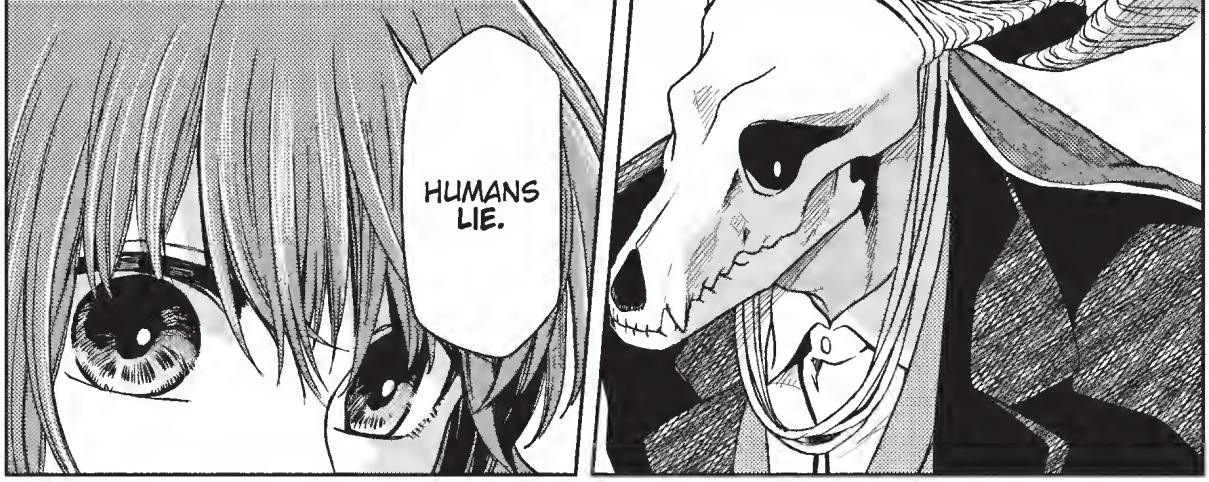

YIKES, MOMENTUM CAN SURE GO SCARY PLACES FAST...!
EEP...!
So embarrassing...
IT'S A STORY...
ABOUT SOMEBODY I CARE ABOUT!
I--! I DON'T... NOT... NEED IT...
DO I NOT FRIGHTEN YOU AT ALL?
CHISE...
BUT I AM WHAT I AM.
YOU SEEM AWFULLY HUNG UP ON THE IDEA THAT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SCARE ME.
YOU KNOW...

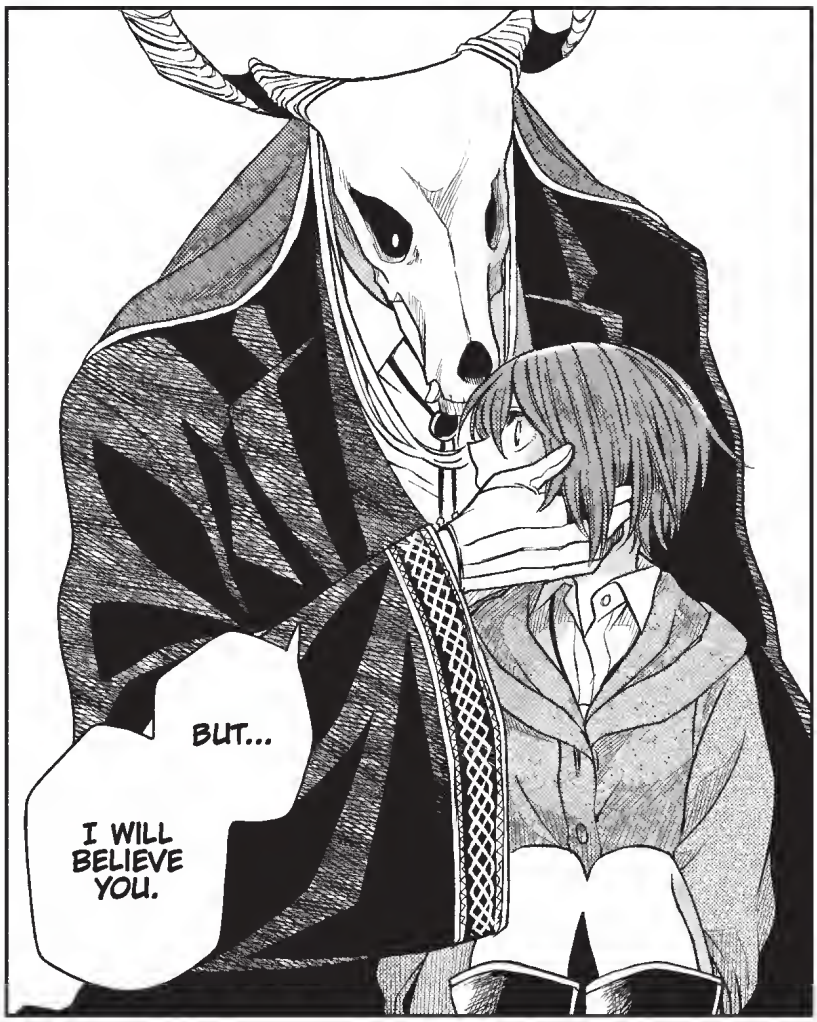

AM I NOT TERRIBLE AND FRIGHT-ENING TO A HUMAN?
MY MOM.
MY DAD.
AND A LITTLE BABY BROTHER.
PLOP
I USED TO...
HAVE A FAMILY.


MY PARENTS BOTH HAD THE SIGHT, LIKE ME.
AND THEY WERE SO IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER.
AS FAR BACK AS I REMEMBER, INHUMAN THINGS WERE ALWAYS COMING AFTER ME.
IT WAS SCARY, BUT WHEN DAD WAS AROUND, I FELT SAFE.
BUT ONE DAY HE JUST... TOOK MY BROTHER AND LEFT.
AND MY MOM GOT SO TIRED AFTER THAT.
BECAUSE OF ME, THERE WERE ALWAYS TERRIFYING THINGS COMING AT US, DAY AND NIGHT.
AND ...
.....
I GUESS, ONE DAY, SHE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT.
SHE DECIDED TO DIE AND NOT TAKE ME WITH HER.


ELIAS ...
I LOVED MY FAMILY.
I LOVED THEM SO MUCH...!
THAT'S WHY...
I DECIDED I DIDN'T WANT A FAMILY ANYMORE.
BUT THEY ALL LEFT ME BEHIND. THEY DIDN'T WANT ME WITH THEM.
I WAS TOO AFRAID THE SAME THING WOULD HAPPEN ALL OVER AGAIN.
BUT THEN...
YOU CAME. YOU SAID I WAS FAMILY.


I MIGHT WANT TO TAKE ANOTHER CRACK AT THIS "FAMILY" THING.
I STARTED THINKING...
WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT THE FUTURE, I WAS ALWAYS THERE.
I WAS ALWAYS PART OF IT.
I STARTED TO THINK I MIGHT ACTUALLY HAVE A FUTURE... AS LONG AS I WAS WITH HIM.
BUT YOU WEREN'T EVER WILLING TO TALK ABOUT YOURSELF.
SO WHEN MASTER LINDEL TOLD ME STORIES ABOUT WHAT YOU WERE LIKE LONG AGO...
IT MADE ME SO HAPPY.
I'M NOT SCARED OF YOU, ELIAS.
I'M SCARED OF YOU ABAN-DONING ME.


HUMANS LIE.


BUT...
I WILL BELIEVE YOU.


I CAN'T DENY THAT.
(SWFF)


NUZZLE
NUZZLE
BECAUSE YOU ARE MY APPRENTICE.


EVEN IF I WISHED TO SAY THE SAME WORDS BACK TO YOU, THEY WOULD BE LIES.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO **EMPATHIZE** WITH HUMANS.
SAID THIS BEFORE, BUT...
CHISE. I HAVE...
I CAN RECITE THESE FACTS. THEY ARE THINGS I **KNOW**...
A CHILD'S BIRTH IS A GOOD THING...
AND A HUMAN'S DEATH IS BAD.
I KNOW FEAR MAY CAUSE A HUMAN TO FIGHT OR FLEE.
AND TEARS MEAN SADNESS.
I KNOW A SMILE MEANS HAPPI-NESS...
THAT'S... HARD TO SAY, HONESTLY.
DIFFERENT PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND AND REACT TO THE SAME THING DIFFERENTLY.
BUT I DO NOT ***FEEL*** THEM. HOW DOES A HUMAN FEEL THAT ANOTHER IS IMPORTANT TO THEM?
HOW DO THEY RECOGNIZE AND CATA-LOGUE THE EMOTION?


ALL RIGHT. THEN HOW DOES IT WORK FOR YOU?
REAL-LY?
WELL, YEAH. IF THERE'RE SEVEN BILLION PEOPLE ON EARTH, THERE'RE SEVEN BILLION WAYS OF DOING IT.
JUST COMING FROM DIFFERENT **CULTURES** CAN HAVE A HUGE EFFECT ON PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT WHAT'S "NORMAL" OR "RIGHT."
URK!
W-WELL...
IT'S... KINDA HARD TO EXPLAIN...
WHILE YOU WERE GONE I FELT VERY COLD, EVEN THOUGH IT IS SUMMER.
WHAT NAME WOULD ***YOU*** GIVE TO THAT FEELING?


.....

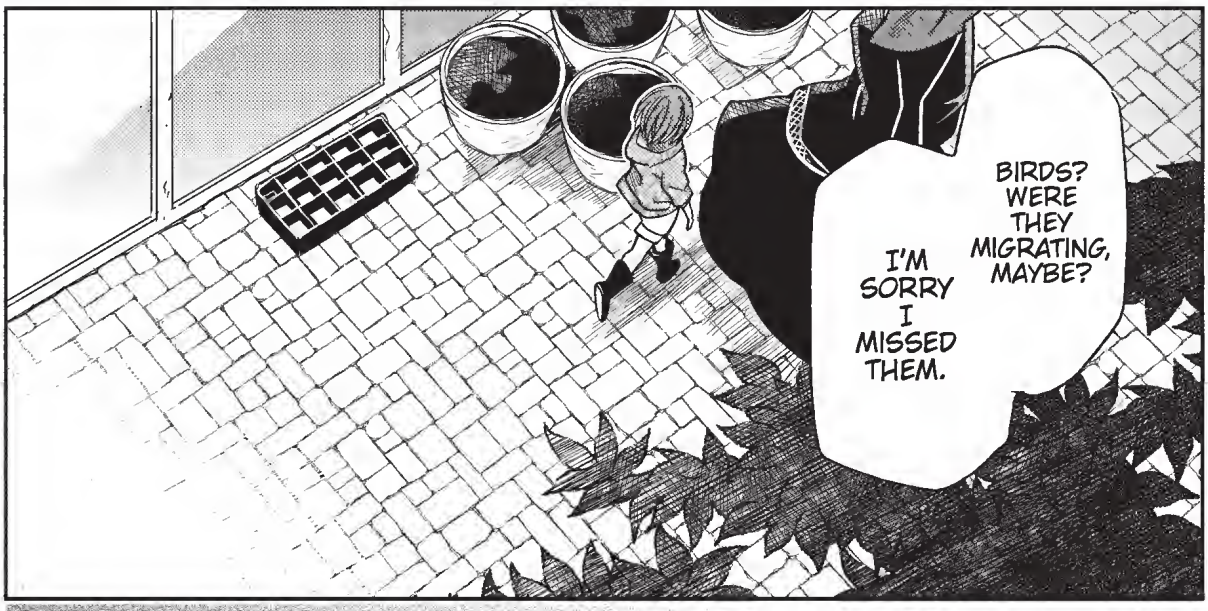

I THINK I'D CALL IT...
"LONE-LINESS."

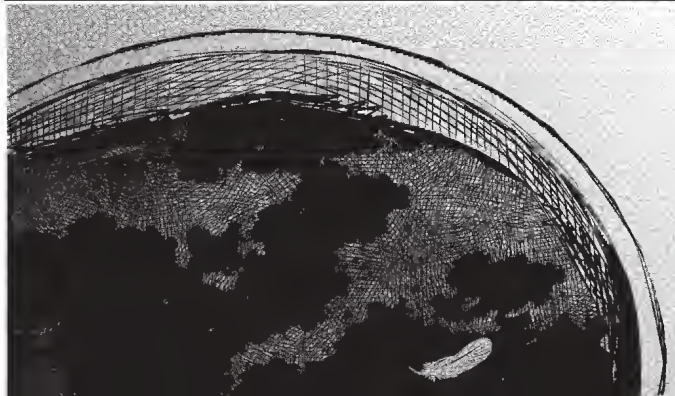

I SEE.
SO WHILE YOU WERE GONE, I FELT *LONELY.*




I THOUGHT SO.
HE REALLY IS STILL PRACTICALLY A CHILD.
HE'S JUST THE SIZE OF AN ADULT, THAT'S ALL.
YES.
I AM VERY PLEASED THAT I BOUGHT YOU. NOW I CAN SAY I'VE LEARNED AT LEAST ONE NEW THING.
I GUESS ...
IT'S LIKE I'M YOUR TEACHER WHEN IT COMES TO HUMAN THINGS.
OOH, YES. I LIKE THAT IDEA.
I LOOK FORWARD TO FURTHER LESSONS...
BOOP
TEACHER OF HUMAN WAYS.


I LOOK FORWARD TO MORE LESSONS, TOO...
TEACHER OF MAGIC.
BUT... HE STILL AVOIDS TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF AS MUCH AS HE CAN.
DID ANYTHING UNUSUAL OR INTERESTING HAPPEN WHILE I WAS AWAY?
NO. A FEW INTERESTING BIRDS FLEW BY, BUT THAT WAS ALL.


BIRDS? WERE THEY MIGRATING, MAYBE?
I'M SORRY I MISSED THEM.


KA-
CHAK

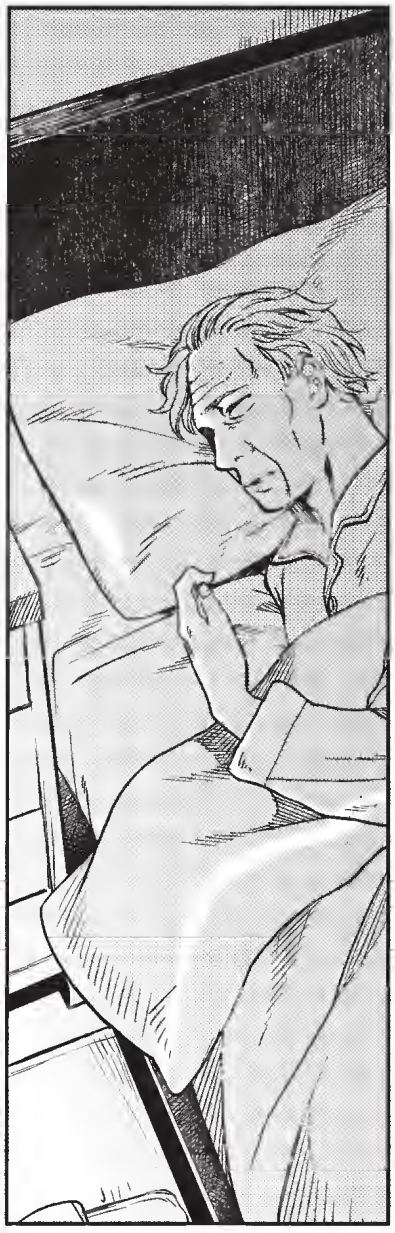

The
Ancient
Magus' Bride


The
Ancient
Magus' Bride


Chapter 20: East, west, home's best.




Goodness, you're such a lazybones today, Joel!




Joel...?

Chapter 20:
East, west, home's best.

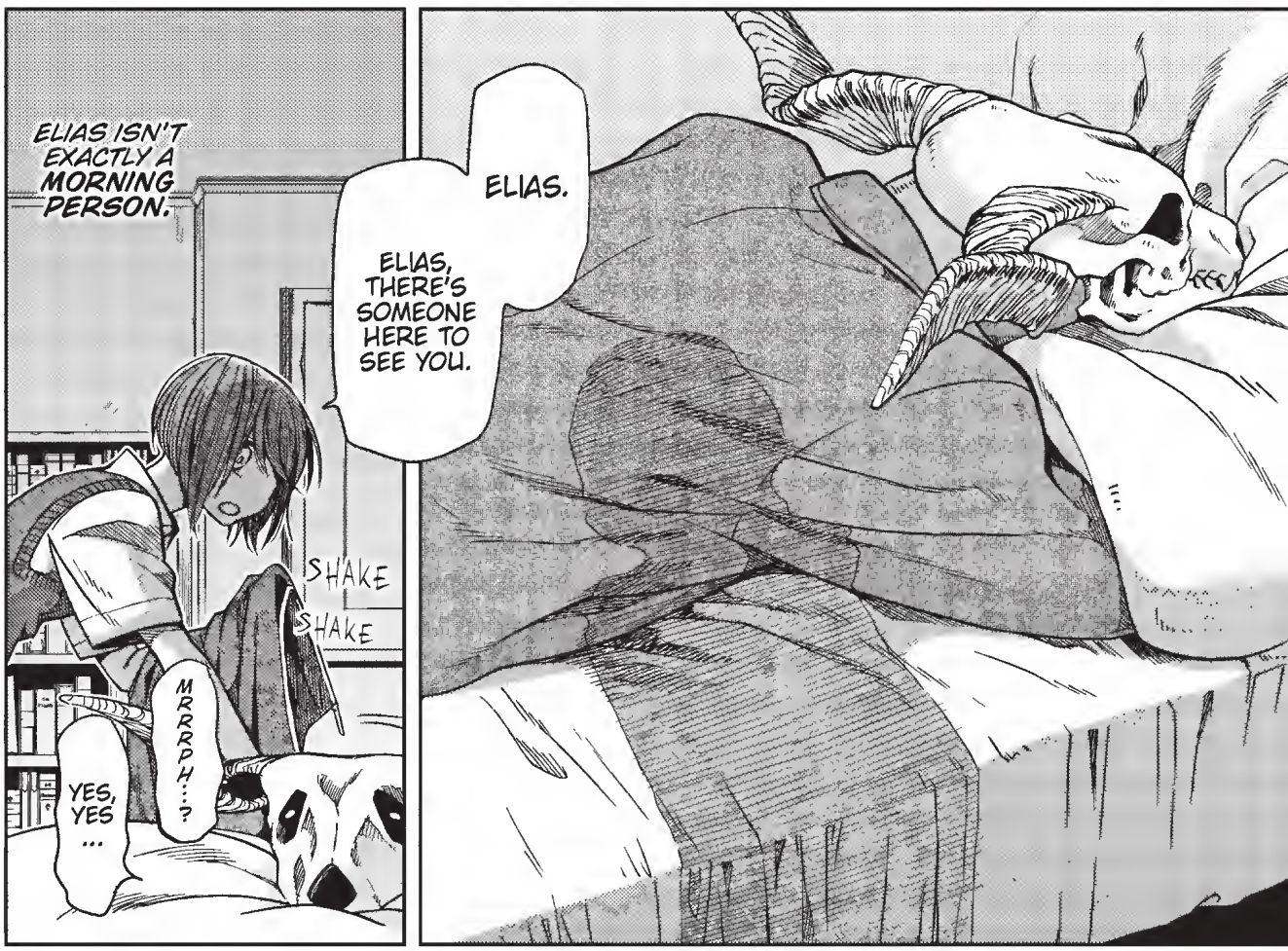


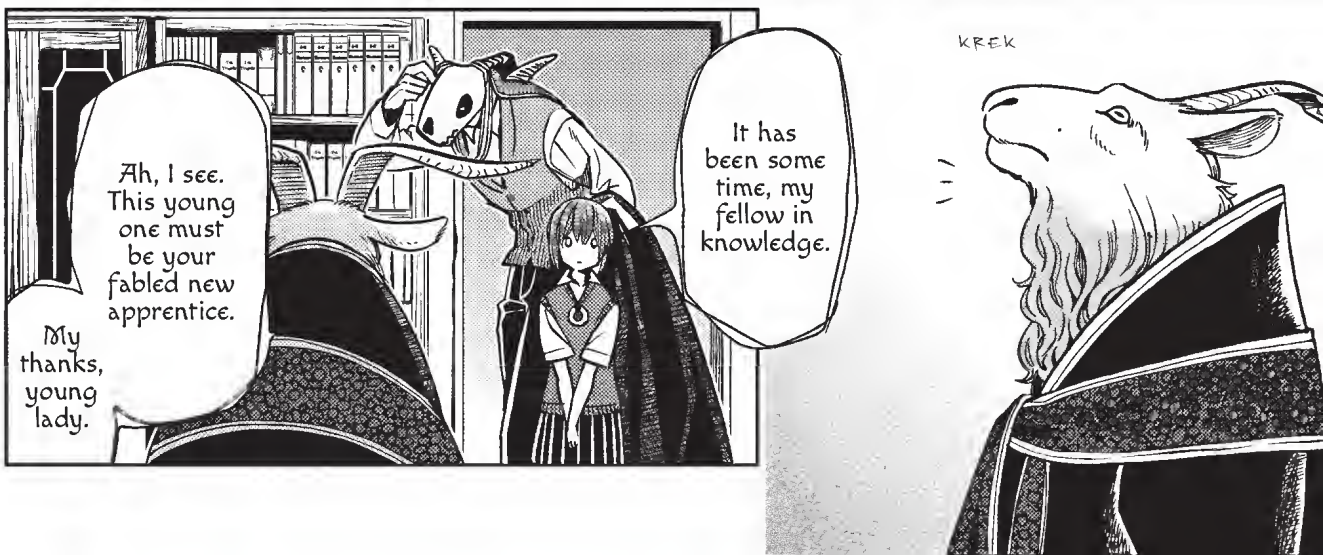

CLUNK
110 A
HELLO THERE.
WE DON'T HAVE A PHONE HERE, SO I THOUGHT I'D WRITE YOU A LETTER.
MEMO
YOU PROBABLY WEREN'T EXPECTING IT, SO I'M SORRY IF IT'S OUT OF THE BLUE.
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR RECENT HELP...
AND KIND-NESS.
TMP
TMP
TMP
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE WORRIED ABOUT ME, SO I'M GETTING IN TOUCH...
TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY LIFE HERE, SO YOU KNOW I'M OKAY.
GWUMM
GWUMM
GWUMM
HUH?

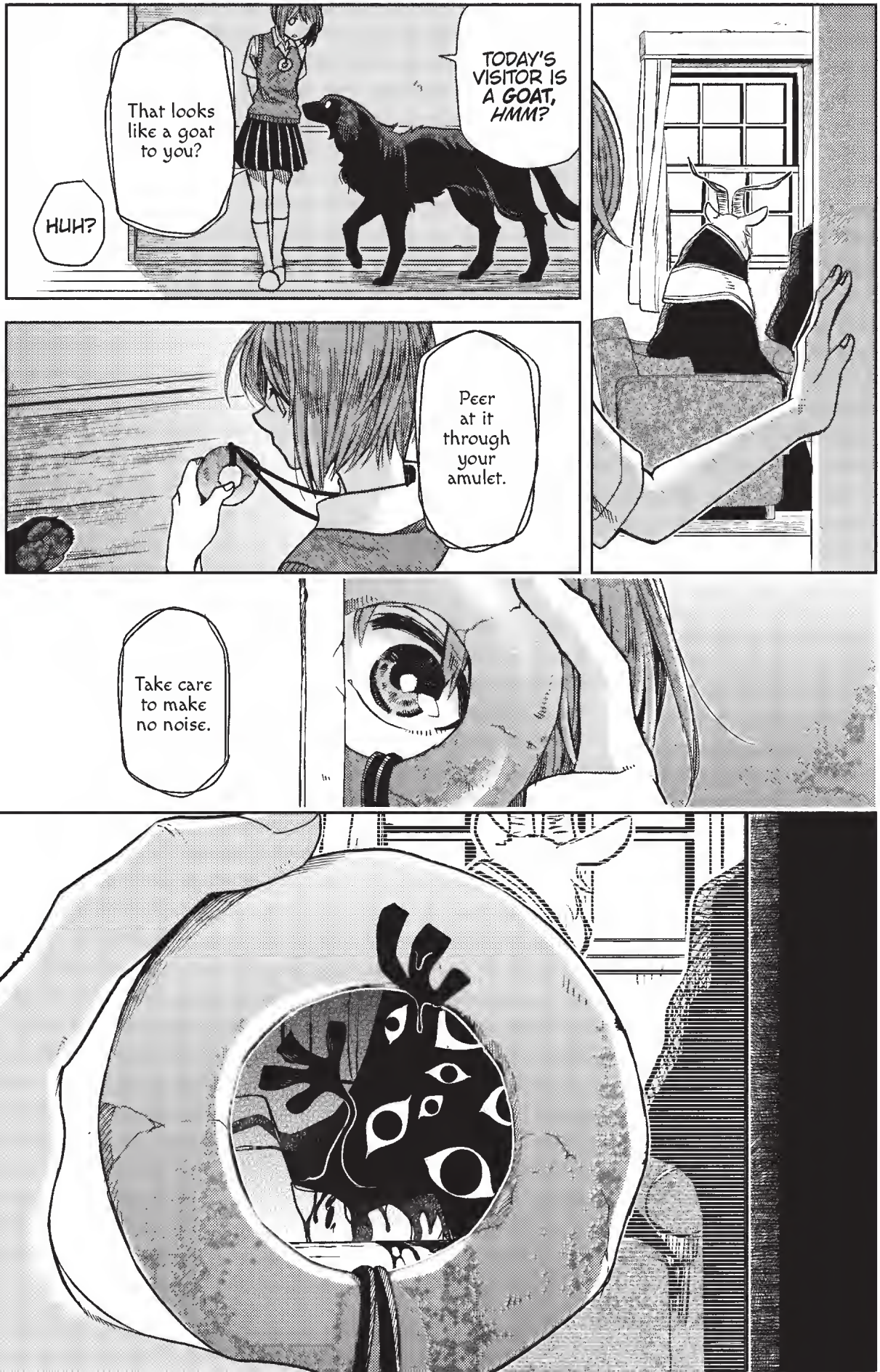

THAT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT...
Aah!
ZOOM
AHA!
A GREM-LIN!
DASH
HOLD IT--!
WHAM
ER... THANK YOU, SILKY.


Good day, Miss. Is this the residence of Sir Ainsworth?
KA-CHAK
COM-ING!
IT'S OKAY TO TINKER, BUT MAKE SURE YOU FIX IT AFTERWARD.
RIIIIIING
That would be splendid. Thank you.
UM...
YES, IT IS. I'LL GO GET HIM.
NOK NOK NOK
ELIAS?
YOU HAVE A GUEST.
EVERY FEW DAYS--AND SOMETIMES EVEN EVERY DAY...
FAE OR OTHER INHUMAN VISITORS COME CALLING ON ELIAS.
TMP TMP TMP

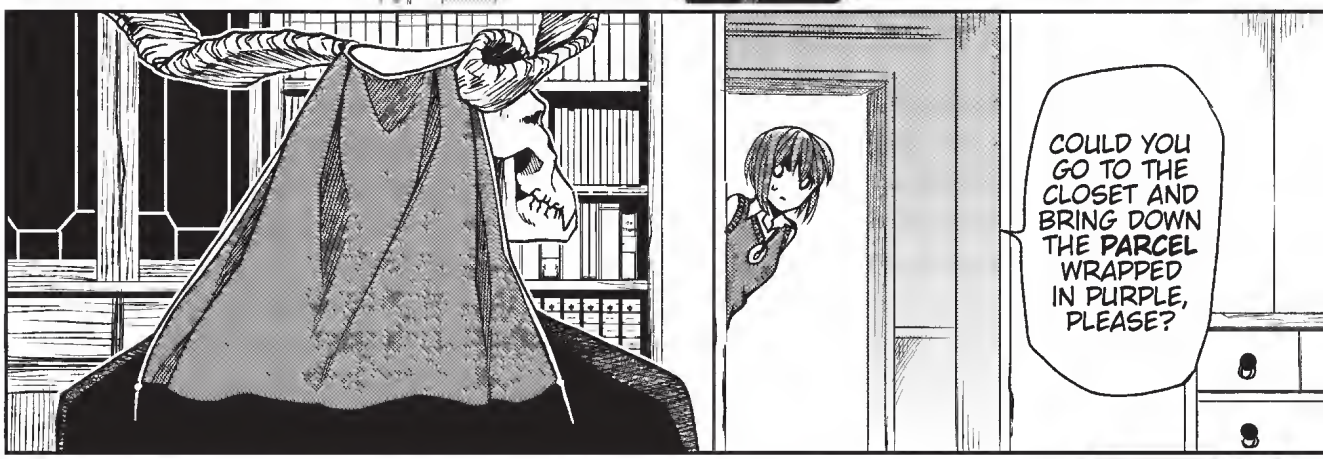

.....
SILENCE...


ELIAS ISN'T EXACTLY A MORNING PERSON.
ELIAS.
ELIAS, THERE'S SOMEONE HERE TO SEE YOU.
SHAKE
SHAKE
MRRRDH...?
YES, YES ...


Ah, I see. This young one must be your fabled new apprentice.
My thanks, young lady.
It has been some time, my fellow in knowledge.
KREK

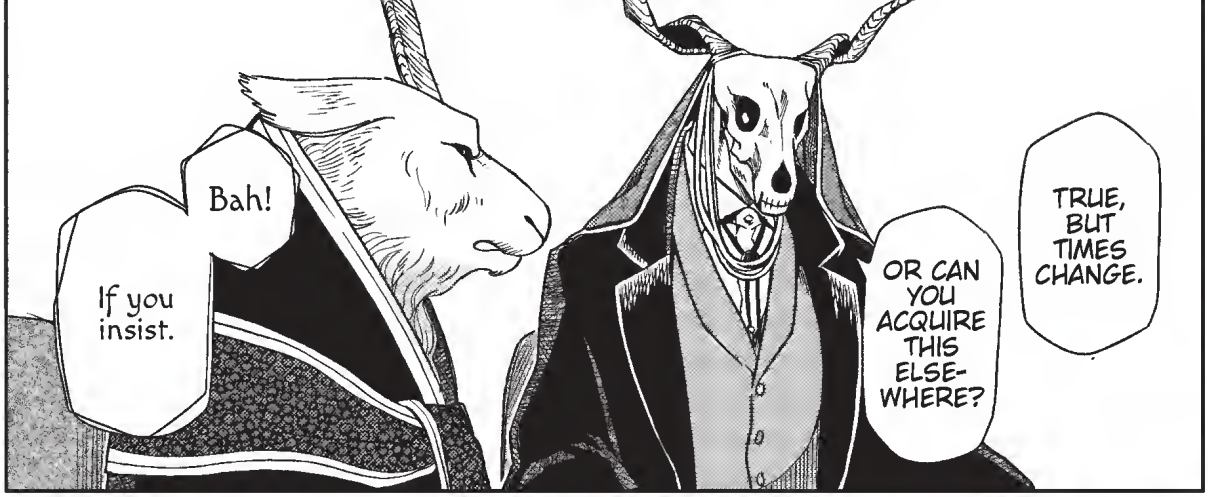

TODAY'S VISITOR IS A GOAT, HMM?
That looks like a goat to you?
HUH?
Peer at it through your amulet.
Take care to make no noise.

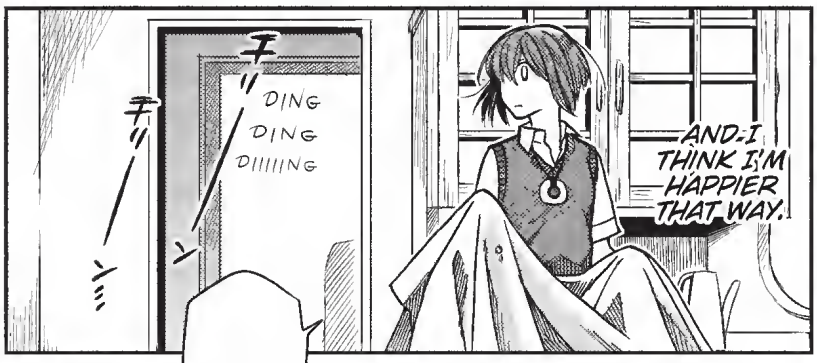

CHISE!
JOLT
Good.
N-NOT CLEARLY.
Did you see it?
WSH

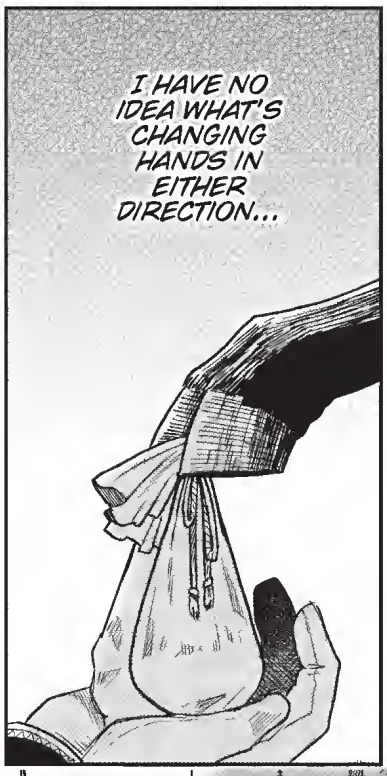

COULD YOU GO TO THE CLOSET AND BRING DOWN THE PARCEL WRAPPED IN PURPLE, PLEASE?


UP ON THE SECOND FLOOR, THERE'S A LOCKED CLOSET.

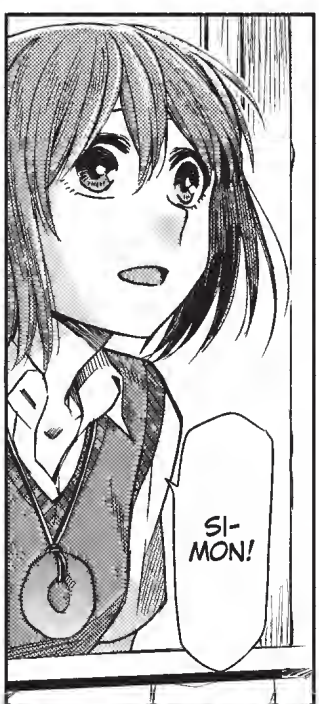

AND SOMEHOW, WHATEVER I'M THERE TO GET IS ALWAYS EXACTLY WHERE I LOOK FIRST.
IT SURE IS STRANGE. (THAT'S PUTTING IT MILDLY.)
IT OPENS ONLY WHEN ELIAS ASKS ME TO FETCH THINGS FROM IT FOR HIM...
KREE...
WRIGL
WRIGL
It's moving...
HERE IT IS!
ISN'T THIS A BIT LIGHT? I'D NEED AT LEAST ANOTHER POUCH.
Oh, come now. One was plenty before.
Ah. Thank you, young miss!
Now, I will trade this for it.


Bah!
If you insist.
OR CAN YOU ACQUIRE THIS ELSE-WHERE?
TRUE, BUT TIMES CHANGE.


DING
DING
DIIIIING
AND I THINK I'M HAPPIER THAT WAY.

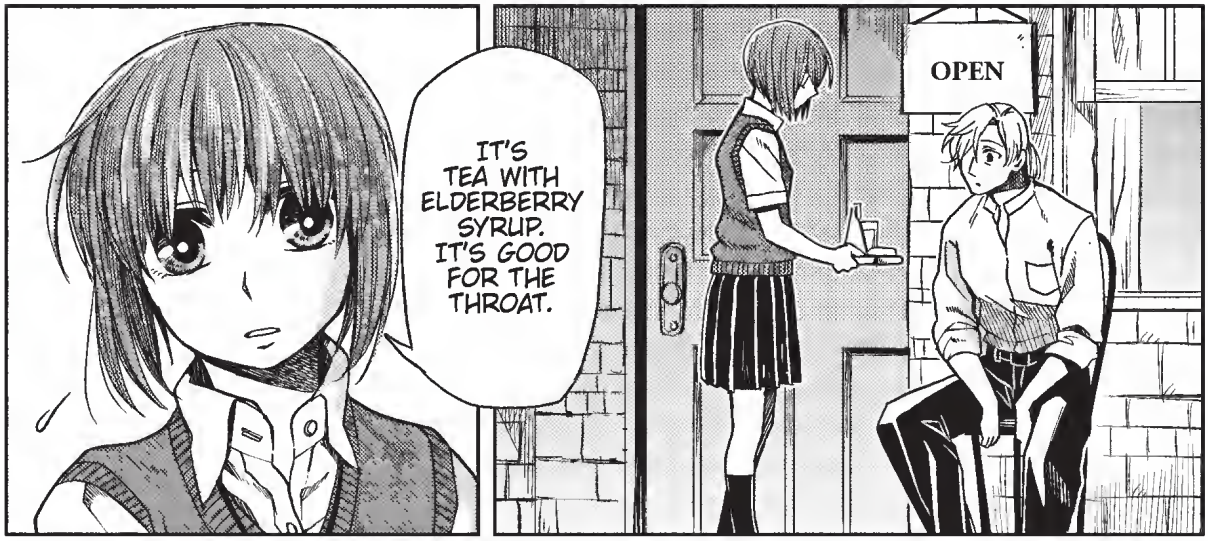

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S CHANGING HANDS IN EITHER DIRECTION...

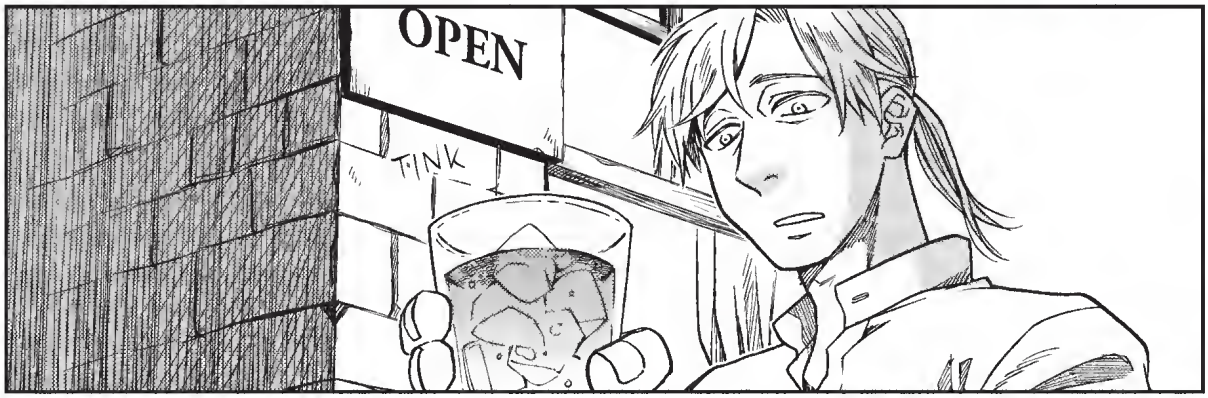

YES!
I'M COM-ING!
TP TP


SI-MON!

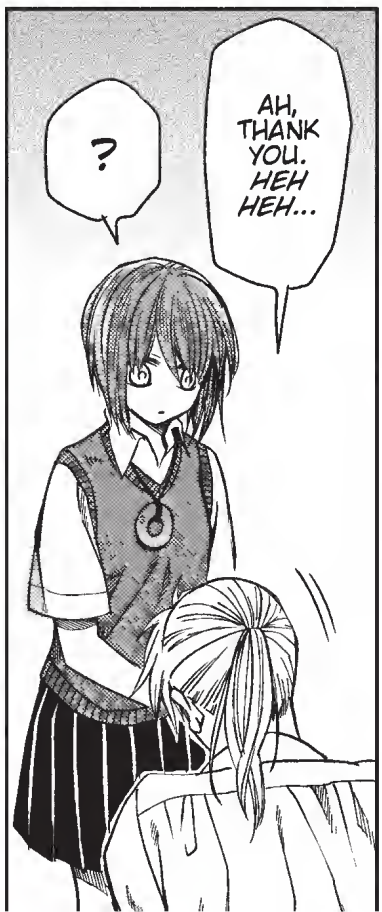

HULLO THERE.
KOFF
SWSH


A WHOLE VARIETY OF PEOPLE STOP BY TO ASK FOR MEDICINE!
OPEN
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? DO YOU WANT TO COME INSIDE?
koff koff
A GOOD DAY TO--
koff.
OPEN
COULD I HAVE MY USUAL REMEDY?
OF COURSE!
IT'S ONE OF MY COUGHING FITS, THAT'S ALL. I'VE HAD THEM ALL MY LIFE.
NO. I'M FINE.
FSSSS
KLINK
AND HERE, IF YOU'D LIKE SOME?


IT'S TEA WITH ELDERBERRY SYRUP. IT'S GOOD FOR THE THROAT.
OPEN


OPEN
TINK

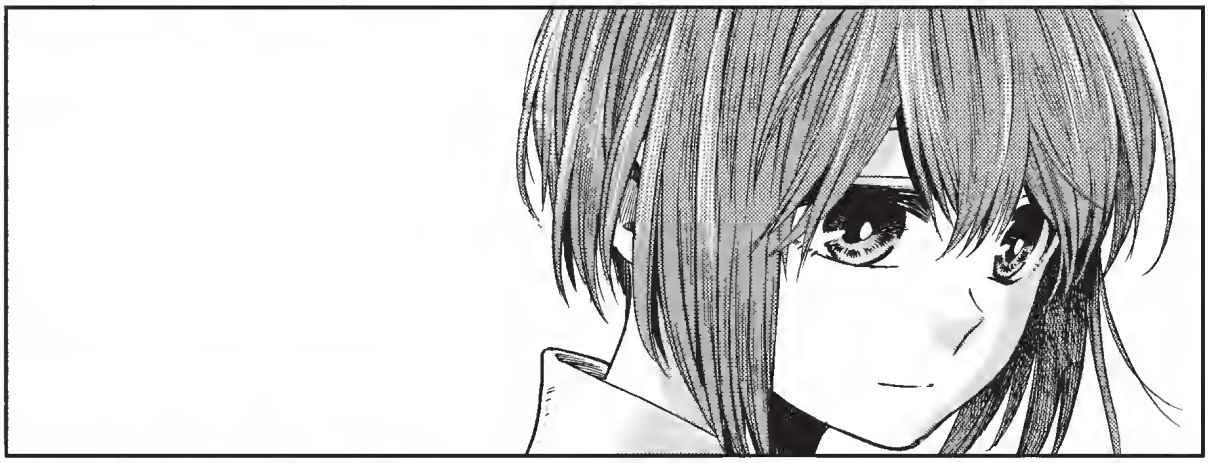

REALLY?
YOU KNOW, THIS WAS THE FIRST REMEDY AINSWORTH EVER GAVE ME.

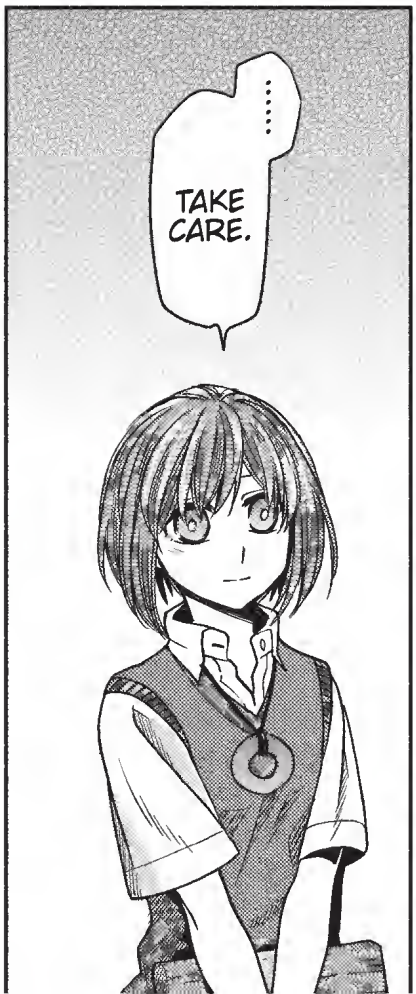

?
AH, THANK YOU. HEH HEH...

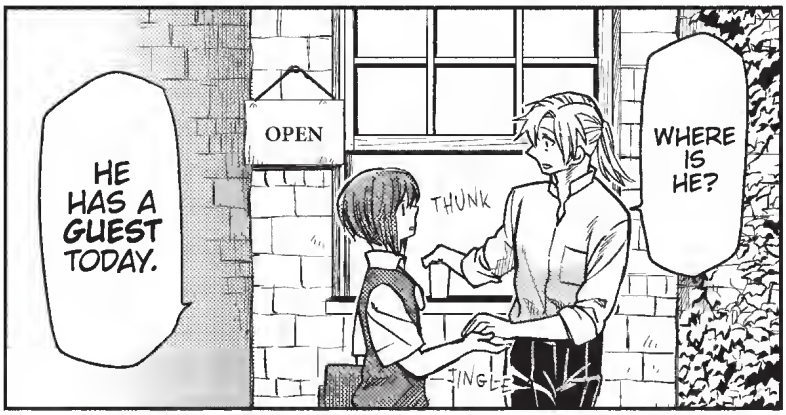

BUT WHEN I WAS FIRST ORDERED TO OBSERVE AINSWORTH, I DID AT LEAST TAKE A STAB AT DOING IT PROPERLY.
I HADN'T EXACTLY ASKED FOR THIS PARTICULAR DUTY...
STAAARE

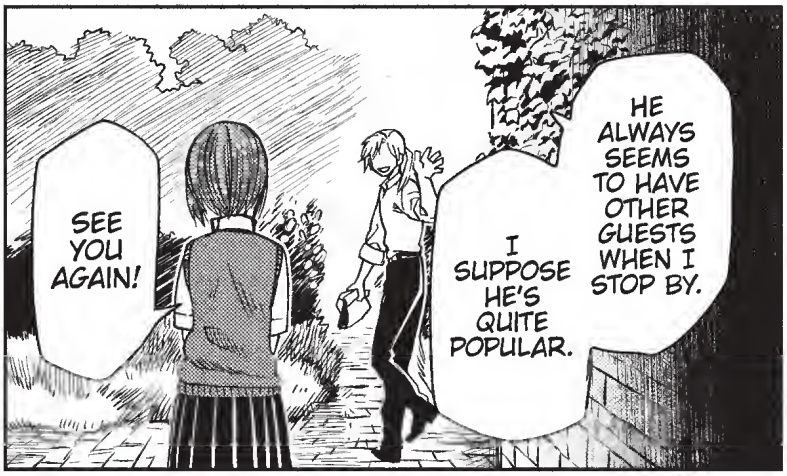

BE QUIET.
WHEN HE FOUND ME AND RAPPED ME OVER THE HEAD WITH HIS STAFF.
HE WHAT ?!
BUT, WELL ...
MY FITS MADE IT TRICKY.
I WAS IN THE THROES OF A PARTICU-LARLY BAD ONE...
KOFF
KOFF
HACK
KOFF
KOFF
URK
I'M SURE HE DID IT ONLY BECAUSE HE THOUGHT MY COUGHING WAS LOUD AND OBNOXIOUS.
WHILE I STOOD THERE IN A DAZE, HE WENT AND GOT ME A GLASS OF ELDERBERRY TEA.
AND YET, HE'S KIND IN HIS OWN WAY.


MMM, THAT'S GOOD.
IT TASTES JUST AS IT DID THAT DAY.



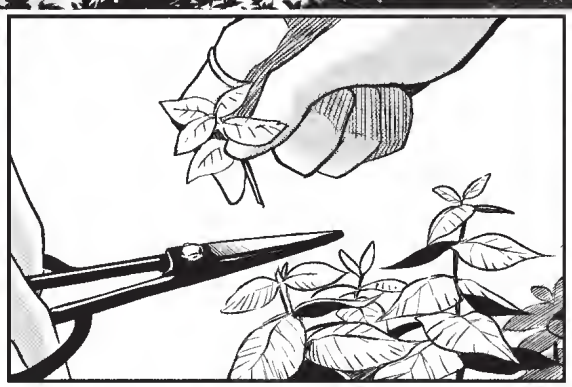

.....
TAKE CARE.

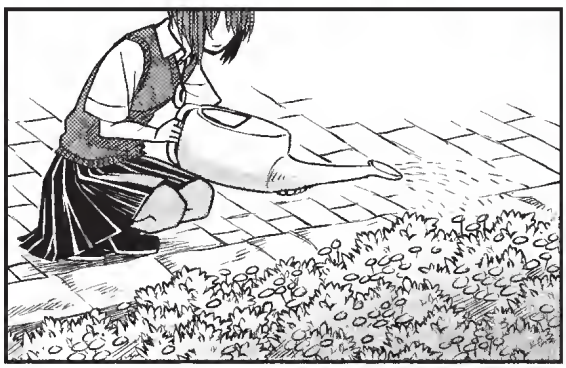

OPEN
THUNK
JINGLE
HE HAS A GUEST TODAY.
WHERE IS HE?

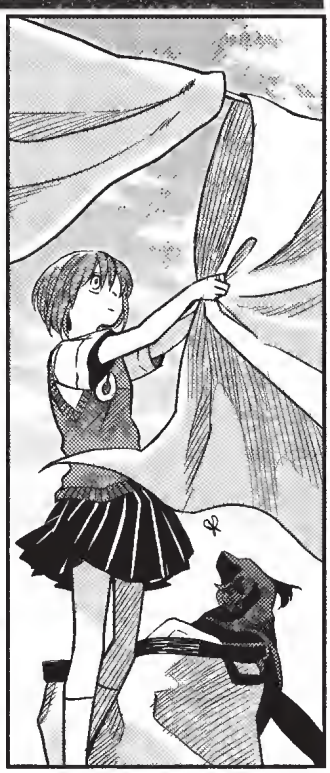

SEE YOU AGAIN!
I SUPPOSE HE'S QUITE POPULAR.
HE ALWAYS SEEMS TO HAVE OTHER GUESTS WHEN I STOP BY.


OPEN
THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO THINK WELL OF ELIAS.
IS HE REALLY JUST TOO DENSE TO SEE IT...?
CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP
PEEP
PEEP

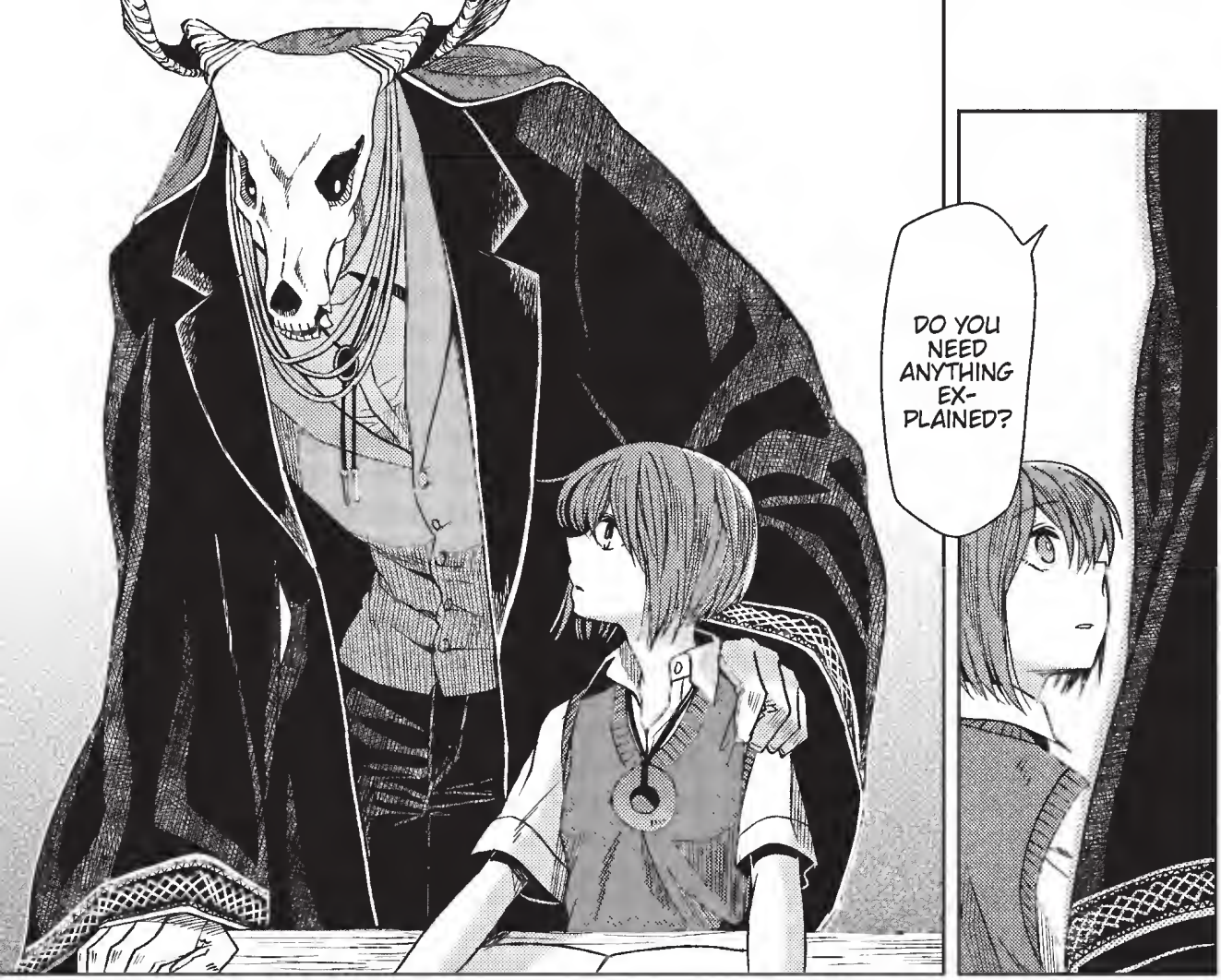

AFTER MY MORNING CHORES, IT'S TIME TO STUDY.
HMM ...

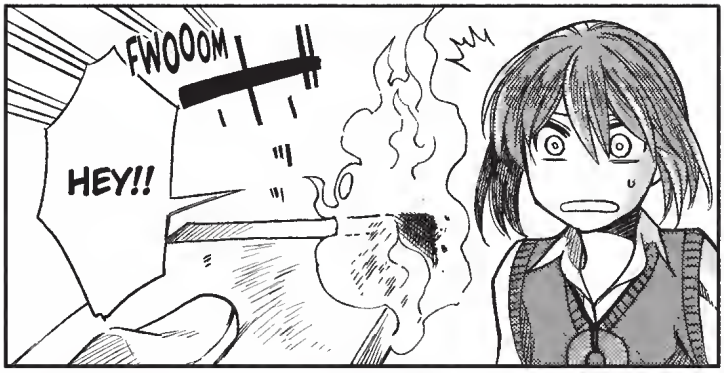


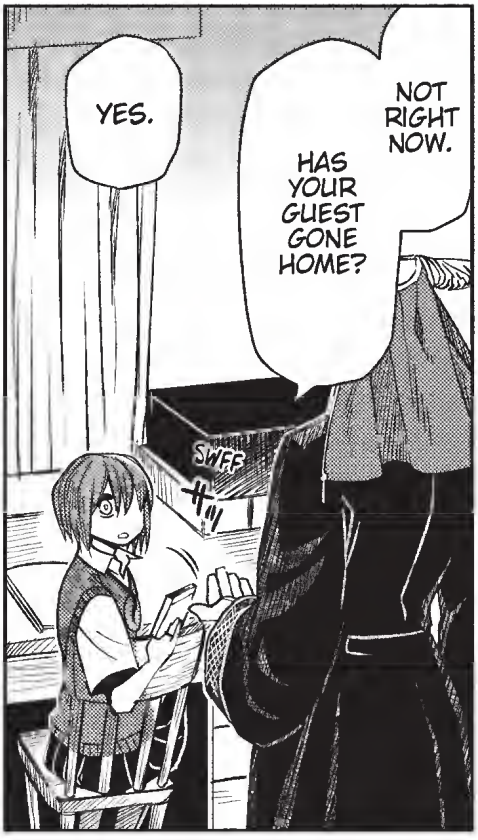


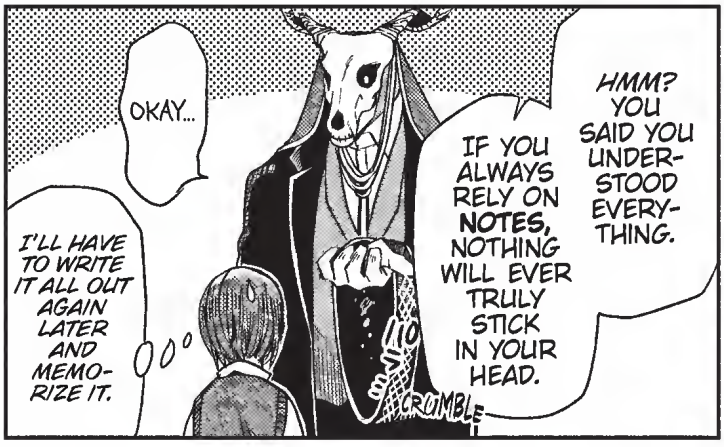



"MAGIC" IS WHEN WE DO SOMETHING BY BORROWING POWER FROM FAERIES AND SPIRITS.
PLACE A FLASK OF WATER CONTAINING A NUGGET OF GOLD IN THE LIGHT OF THE WANING GIBBOUS MOON...
THEN SUBMERGE A SEASONAL FLOWER AND A FOUR-LEAF CLOVER IN IT, AND SET IT ON A WINDOWSILL FOR FOUR NIGHTS, FACING EACH CARDINAL DIRECTION ONCE.
WOW, MAKING FAIRY OINTMENT IS A LOT OF WORK.
IT'S STRONG ENOUGH TO INTERFERE WITH THE LAWS OF NATURE.
TRYING TO USE IT WITHOUT KNOWING OR RESPECTING THE RISKS INVOLVED CAN HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.
THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE TO STUDY.
YOU NEED TO LEARN SO YOU CAN USE MAGIC TO HELP OTHERS...
AND TO PROTECT YOURSELF.
KREK
KREK


DO YOU NEED ANYTHING EX-PLAINED?


FWOOOM
HEY!!


NOT RIGHT NOW.
HAS YOUR GUEST GONE HOME?
YES.
SWFF


HMM? YOU SAID YOU UNDER-STOOD EVERY-THING.
IF YOU ALWAYS RELY ON NOTES, NOTHING WILL EVER TRULY STICK IN YOUR HEAD.
OKAY...
I'LL HAVE TO WRITE IT ALL OUT AGAIN LATER AND MEMO-RIZE IT.
CRUMBLE

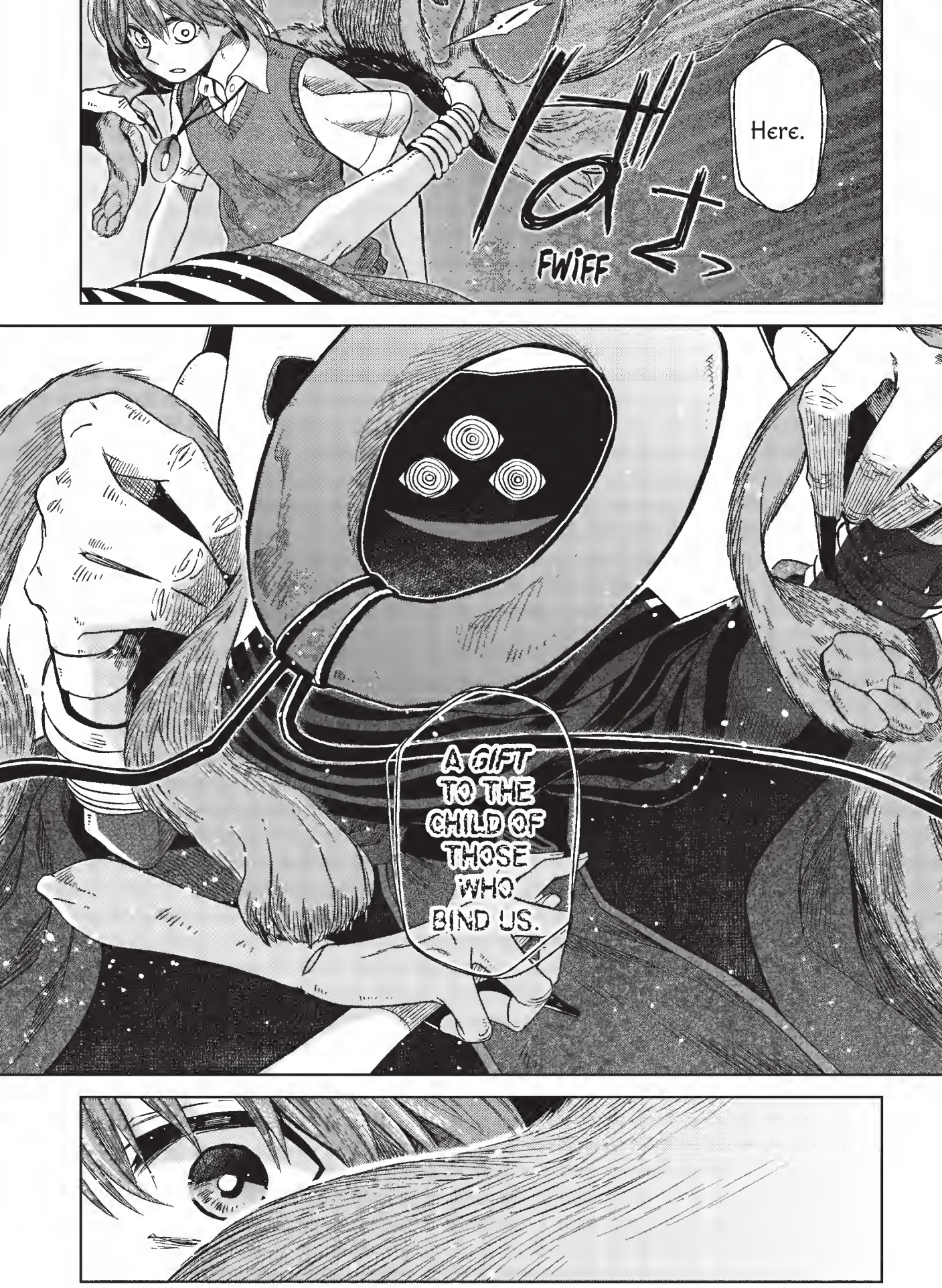

MIGHT I SEE IT?
YOU KNOW, I'VE YET TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT YOUR **WAND.**
HERE.
LOVELY. IT IS THE SAME COLOR AS YOUR HAIR.
SWFF
YES. IT'S CONSIDERED ***WISE*** FOR ANOTHER HAND TO BE INVOLVED IN A WAND'S CREATION.
ARE THE FINISHING TOUCHES ALWAYS DONE BY SOMEONE ELSE?
I DIDN'T REQUEST LINDEL'S AID WHEN I MADE MINE, SO I SUPPOSE I MUSTN'T BEGRUDGE HIM.
I'D THOUGHT I WOULD BE THE ONE TO ADD ITS FINAL TOUCHES, BUT AH WELL.


WHY DIDN'T YOU ASK FOR LINDEL'S HELP WHEN YOU MADE YOURS?
WANDS ARE AS STAVES-- SOLID TOOLS WE MAGES RELY UPON TO HELP US WALK OUR LONG, LONG JOURNEYS.
THAT'S WHY IT IS TRADITIONAL FOR ELDERS TO AID IN AND BLESS THE CREATION OF A WAND...
THUS ENSURING THE FLEDGLING MAGE IS **PROPERLY PREPARED** FOR THE ROAD AHEAD.
THEY SEEM TO THINK OF EACH OTHER AS FRIENDS, BUT THEY'RE NEVER ON THE SAME PAGE, ARE THEY?
I'VE ONLY BEEN SURE OF WHERE TO FIND HIM FOR THE PAST CENTURY OR SO.
BECAUSE I HADN'T THE FAINTEST CLUE **WHERE** HE WAS.
RIIIIING
!
YOU'LL NEED TO WAIT A LONG TIME FOR THAT.
I'LL COME ASK YOU FOR THE FINISHING TOUCHES.
WELL, IF I EVER HAPPEN TO NEED TO MAKE A NEW ONE...

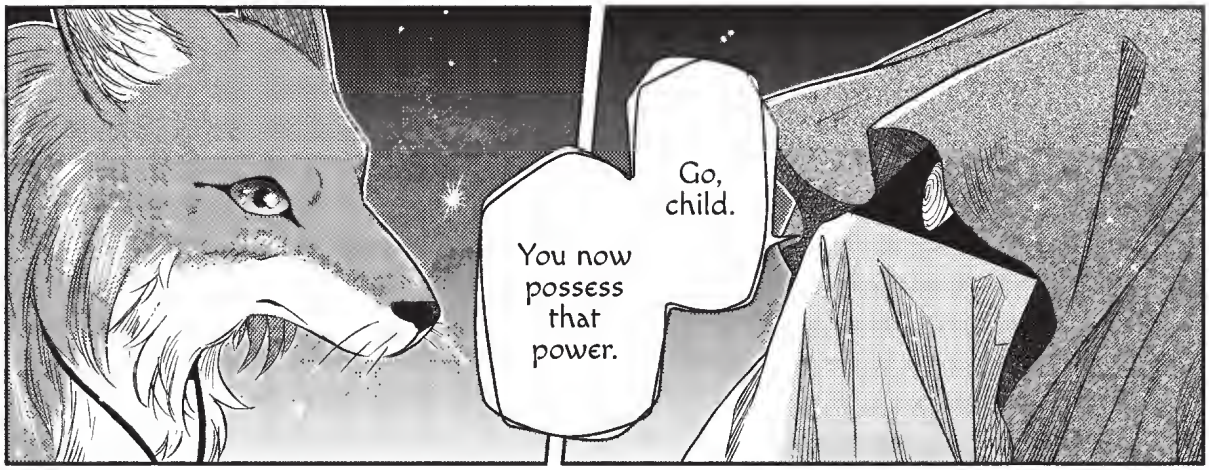

Might the master of the house be within?
Your pardon for disturbing you so late.
A GUEST AT THIS HOUR...?
I'LL GET IT!
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING--
KA-CHAK
!
ASHEN EYE!

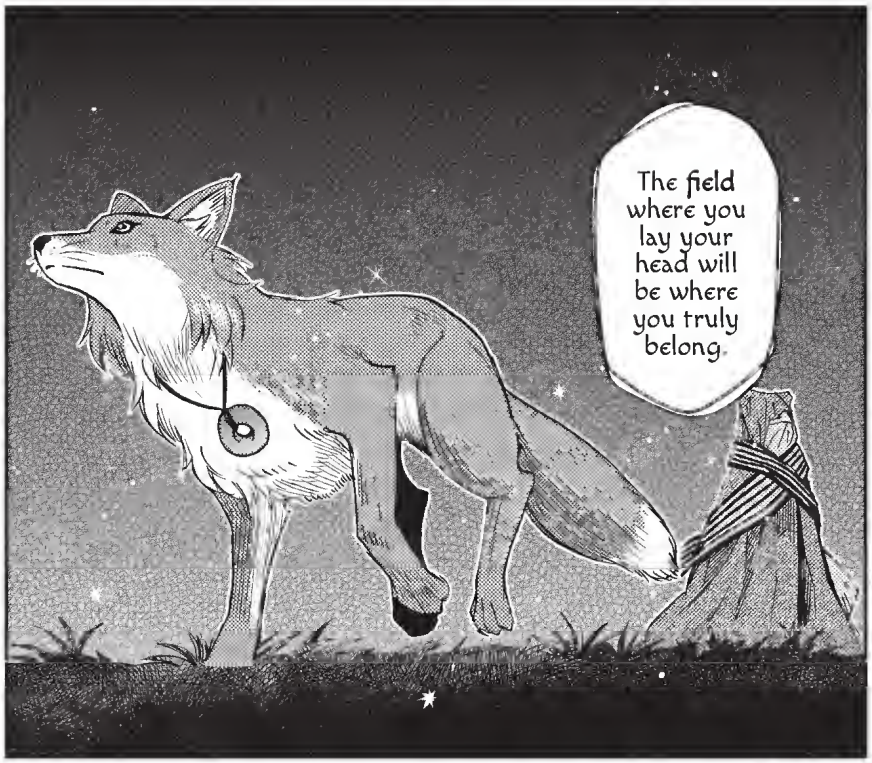

The wind whispered to me of a new mageling's birth.
I thought to call upon you and offer my blessings.
SWSH
I have no wish to harm a single hair on her head.
Precious keystones that can grasp the hands of both mortals and fae.
Mages are the few that stand twixt this world and the next...
Come, come. No need to fear me so.
THIS IS NO HUMAN. IT IS A CREATURE MILLENNIA OLD.
FROM TIME TO TIME, IT VISITS OTHERS ON A WHIM. BE ON YOUR GUARD.
Your blood comes from the world's eastern edge...
Aah ...
Hrn, hrm ...
PAT
Smells like sand...
PAT
PAT


But your hair and eyes...
Unlike those of most such island-dwellers, are not the hue of fresh-turned earth.
Perhaps your lineage also carries a tinge of blood from the *western* continent.
HUH?
I...I'M SORRY, BUT...
I, UM, DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT MY FAMILY...
No matter.
No matter.
Blood ties are vital among a herd...
But matter little to the individual.
SWOOF
It is a particularly **human** foible...
To spend too much time contemplating the meaningless details of life. Far better to let **instinct** and **nature** guide you.
SWFF

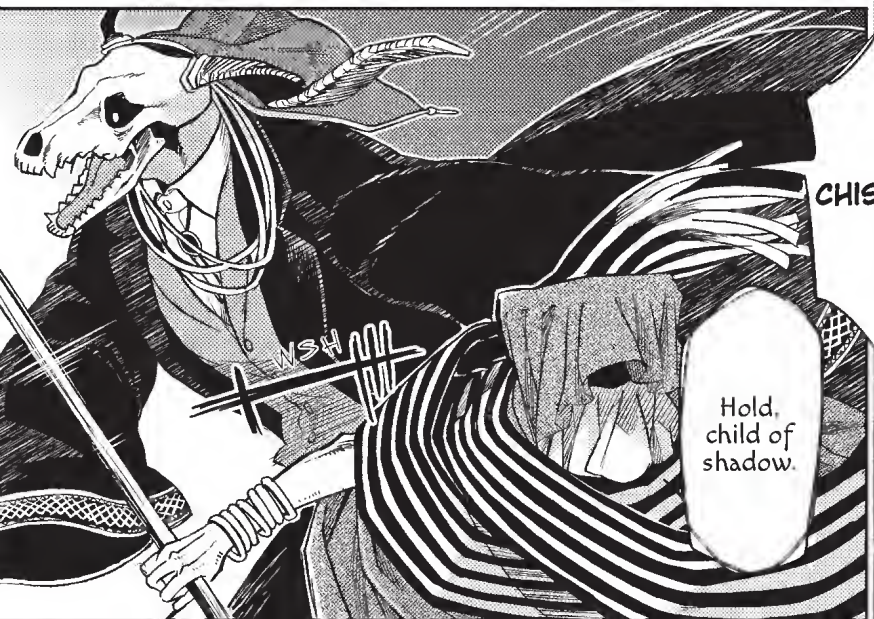

Here.
FWIFF
A GIFT TO THE CHILD OF THOSE WHO BIND US.

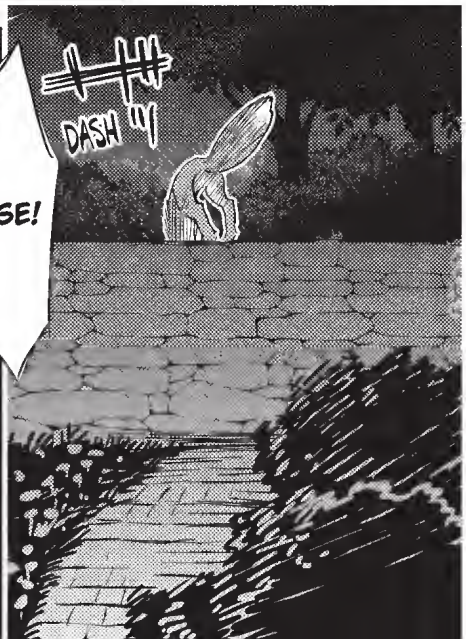

ASHEN EYE--!
CLINK
SHNK


Go, child.
You now possess that power.


The field where you lay your head will be where you truly belong.


Run fast and far, and when at last you choose to rest...
TUP


WSH
Hold, child of shadow.


CHISE!
DASH

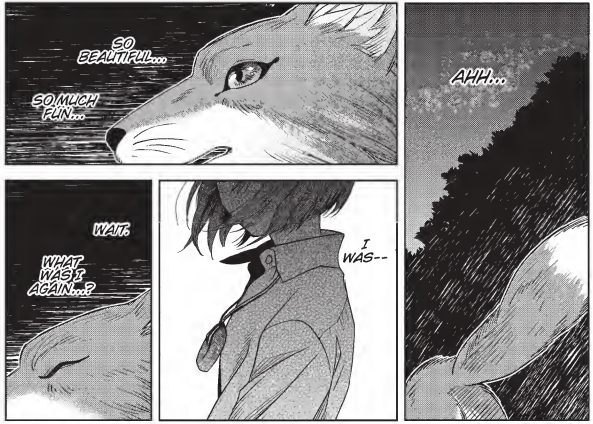

Or have you forgotten that they, too, were once called our kindly *neighbors*...?
IS THIS A *PRANK* OF SOME SORT?
IS YOUR LOATHING OF THE HUMANS WITH THE EYES TO SEE YOU TRULY SO DEEP?
No, no. 'tis but grand-motherly concern.
After all, the sleigh beggy have always been that type of creature.
Human, yes. But far, far closer to *us* than true mortals.
If this is the home she yearns for, she'll return without your pursuit.
And if she is to be at your side, would it not be best for her to be equally inhuman?
Her kind's existence is so fleeting.
Human life has become so *fragile*--perhaps even more so...
Than an incomplete thing born of the forest's shadow.


YOU ALL DO THAT.
YOU ALL CALL ME SUCH THINGS TO DISTANCE YOURSELVES FROM ME.
FWISH
THAT I DON'T LIKE THE COLD.
I'VE NOW LEARNED ...
I NEVER PAR-TICULARLY MINDED... UNTIL NOW.
BUT...
SHFF
DART
Ahh...
It's a delight to watch the young grow up.
Even after thousands of years, it's a pleasure to see.




I COULD GO FAR, FAR AWAY, UNTIL I'M THE ONLY ONE LIVING THERE...

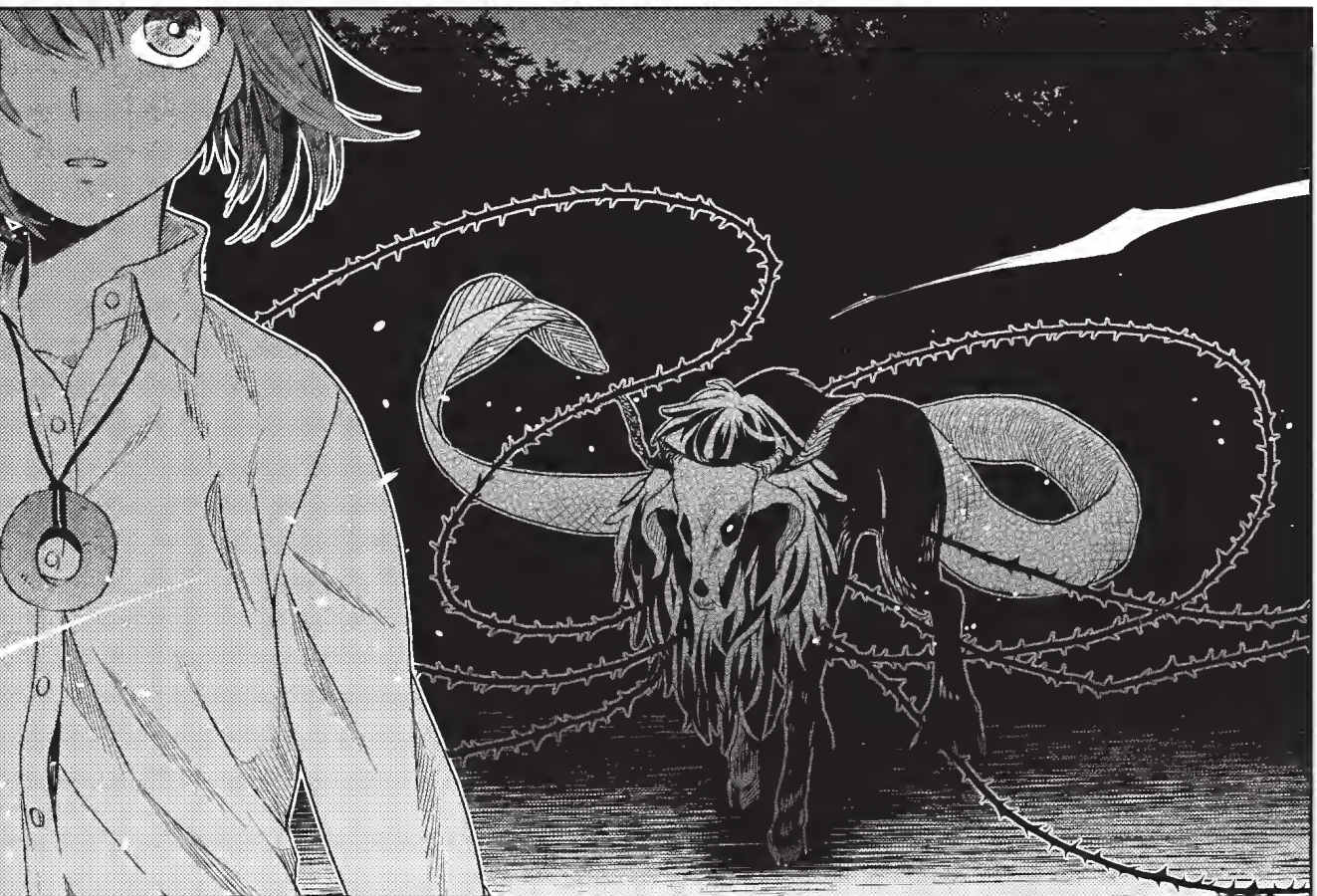

I FEEL LIKE I COULD GO ANY-WHERE.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE I SHOULD I GO?


SO BEAUTIFUL...
SO MUCH FUN...
AHH...
WAIT.
WHAT WAS I AGAIN...?
I WAS--


HMM...?
I HEAR SOMEONE CALLING ME.
Chise.
Are you truly going to leave?
ALMOST SHOUTING IN MY EAR.
R-STL
Are you all right with that?
Yes. I am.
By what?
By the other side.
Yes.
I'm being called.

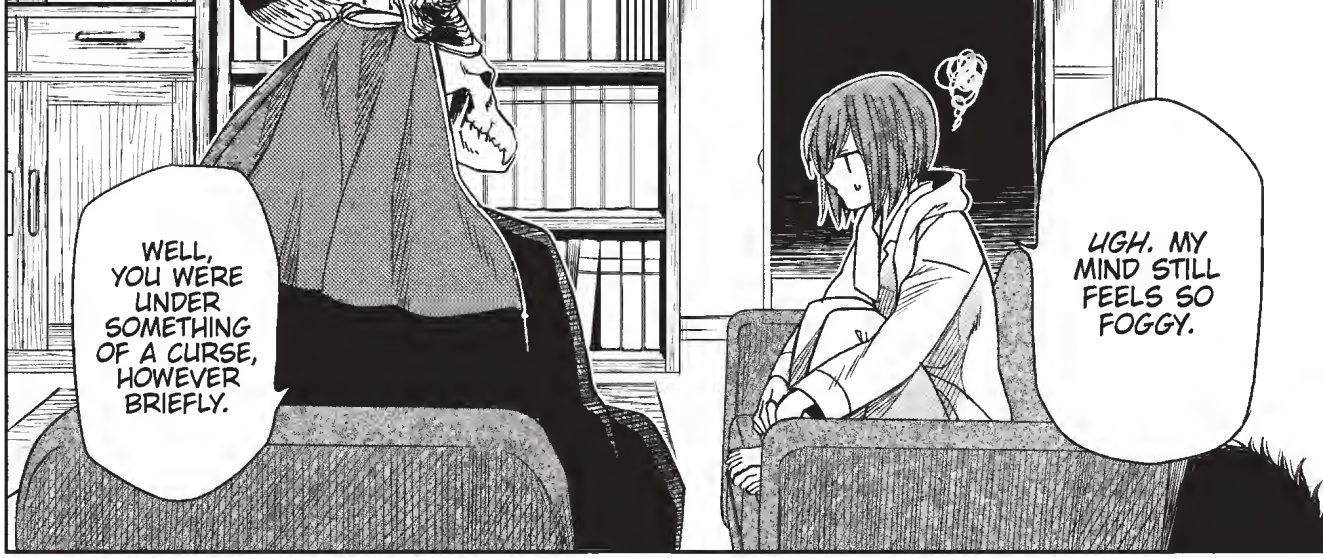

Leaving... something ...?
Wait... was I?
What am I...?
If that's true, I will accompany you.
But...
Are you sure you're not leaving anything behind?

Chise.




There are still many things I don't understand.
Without you here to teach me, I won't know what to do.
Chise.
Wait.
KLOP
You won't...?
NUZZLE
SNFF
No.
I won't.
I'll be cold...
And also... lonely.

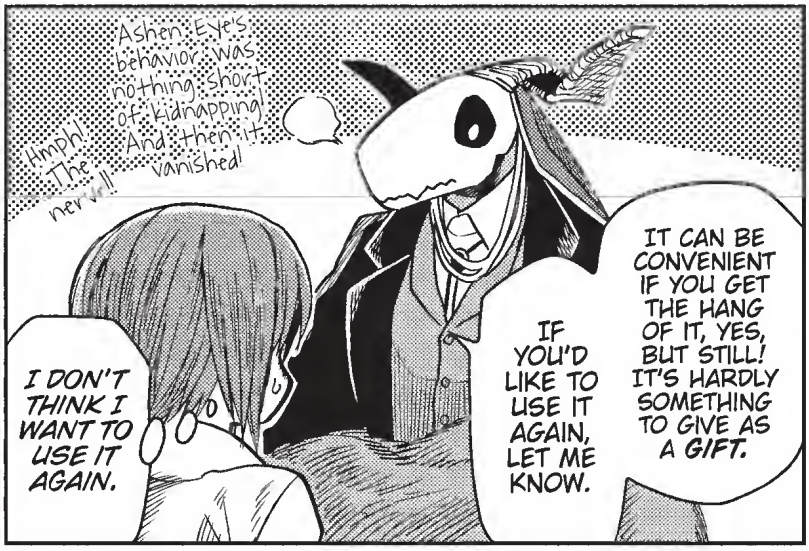

Yeah...
I DON'T LIKE BEING COLD, EITHER.
ELIAS...
LET'S GO HOME.

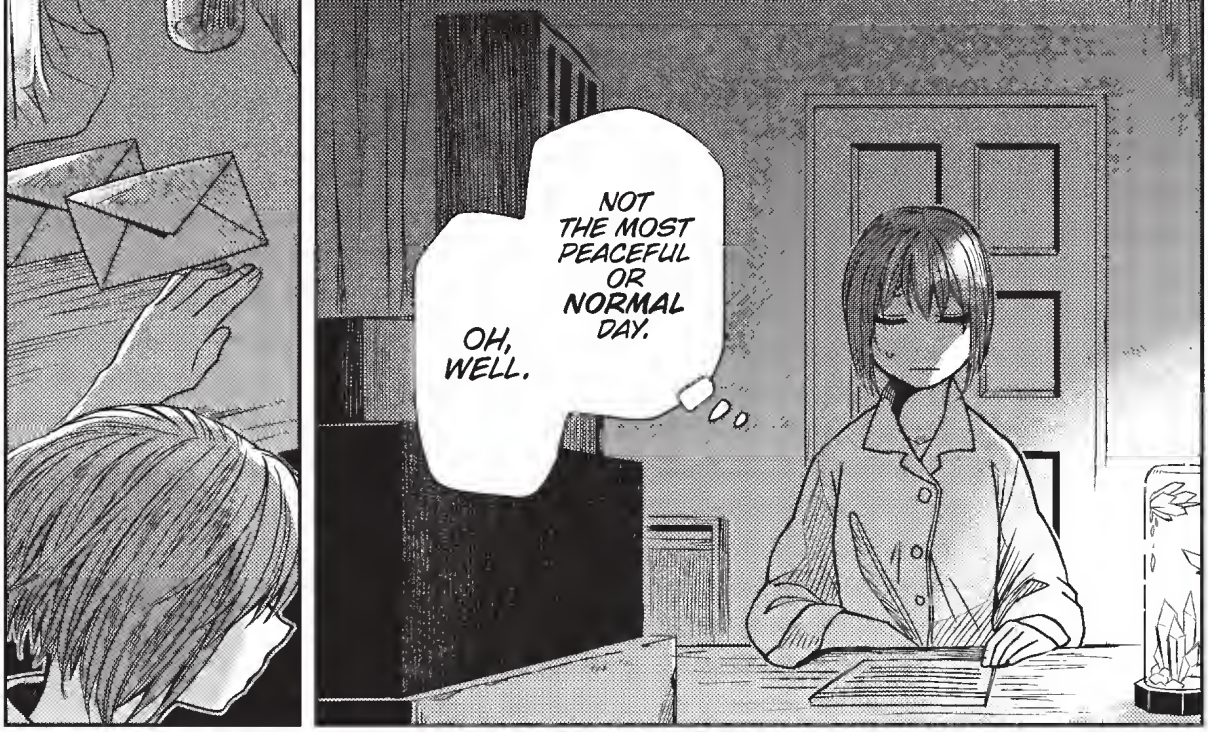

UGH. MY MIND STILL FEELS SO FOGGY.
WELL, YOU WERE UNDER SOMETHING OF A CURSE, HOWEVER BRIEFLY.

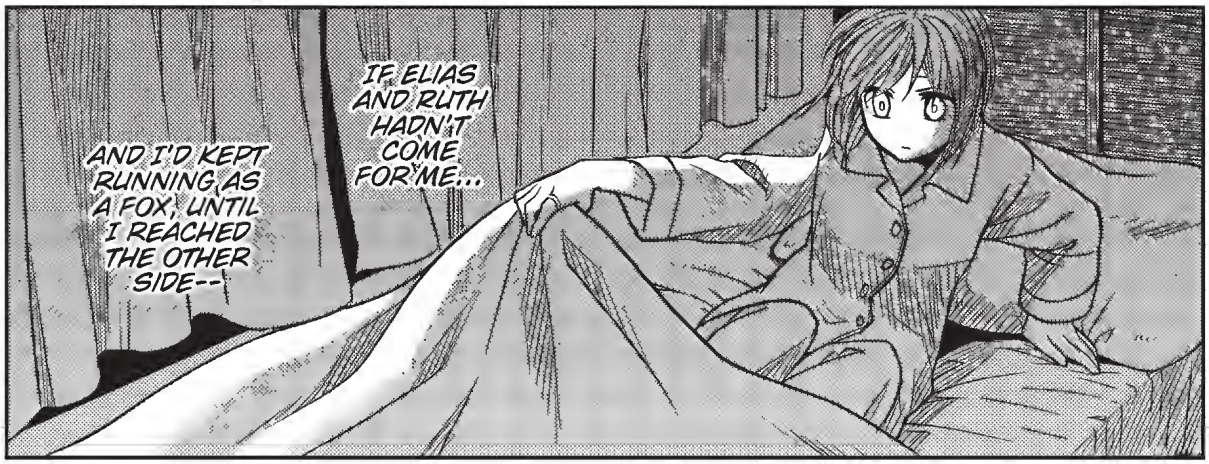

YES. WERE-WOLVES ARE MOST COMMON.
THERE ARE TWO DISTINCT TYPES: THOSE WHO ARE NATURALLY BORN WITH BOTH HUMAN AND BESTIAL FORMS...
AND THOSE HUMANS WHO ARE CURSED TO TAKE AN ANIMAL'S SHAPE UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS.
THIS PELT WAS TAKEN FROM A CURSED HUMAN WHILE IT WAS IN BEAST FORM.


A PELT SUCH AS THIS IS USED TO TURN SOMEONE INTO A WERE-BEAST.
IN YOUR CASE, A WERE-FOX.
"WERE-BEASTS"?


SO, THAT WAS TODAY.
I WAS TRANS-FORMED INTO A FOX.


Ashen-Eye's behavior was nothing short of kidnapping! And then it vanished!
Hmph! The nerve!!
I DON'T THINK I WANT TO USE IT AGAIN.
IF YOU'D LIKE TO USE IT AGAIN, LET ME KNOW.
IT CAN BE CONVENIENT IF YOU GET THE HANG OF IT, YES, BUT STILL! IT'S HARDLY SOMETHING TO GIVE AS A GIFT.

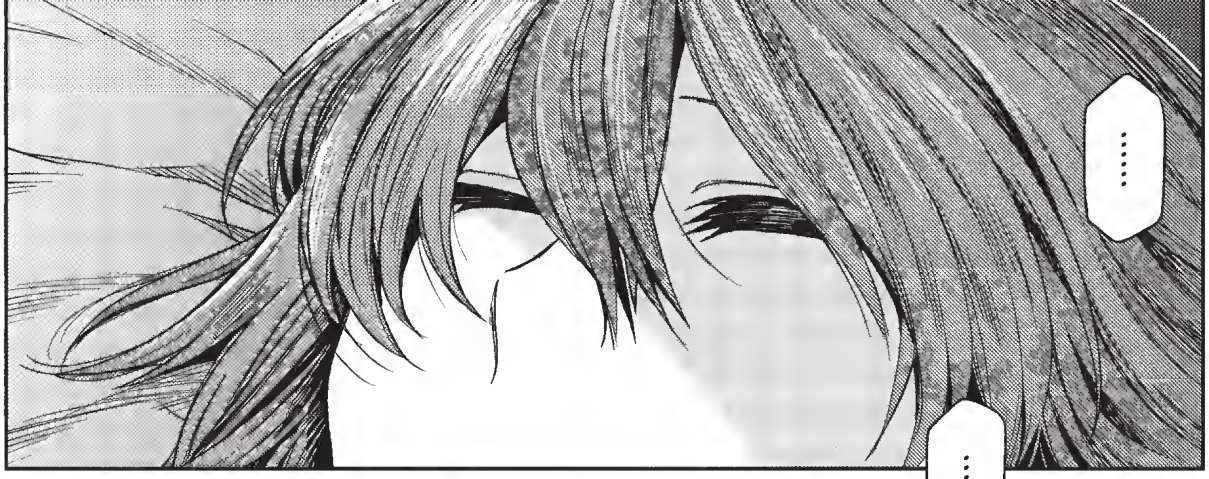

NOT THE MOST PEACEFUL OR NORMAL DAY.
OH, WELL.


IF ELIAS AND RUTH HADN'T COME FOR ME...
AND I'D KEPT RUNNING AS A FOX, UNTIL I REACHED THE OTHER SIDE--


Good night.
STOP ME EVEN IF I LOOK LIKE I DO WANT TO.
GOOD NIGHT.

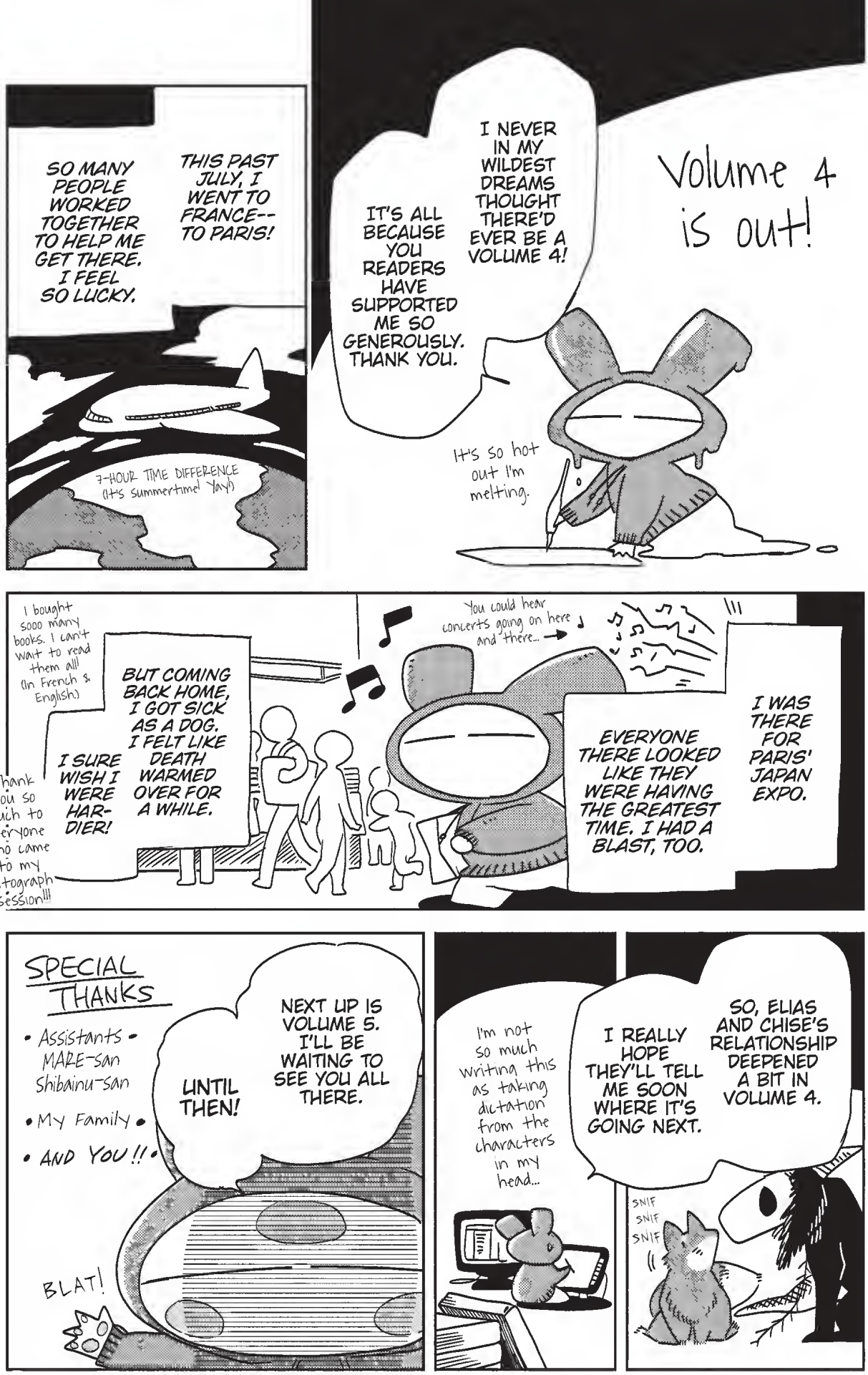

If you hadn't truly wanted to go, I would have stopped you.
のしっ
FLUMP




.....


.....
.....?


Chise!
It's Joel!
You must help him!
To be continued...


Volume 4 is out!
I NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS THOUGHT THERE'D EVER BE A VOLUME 4!
IT'S ALL BECAUSE YOU READERS HAVE SUPPORTED ME SO GENEROUSLY. THANK YOU.
It's so hot out I'm melting.
THIS PAST JULY, I WENT TO FRANCE-- TO PARIS!
SO MANY PEOPLE WORKED TOGETHER TO HELP ME GET THERE. I FEEL SO LUCKY.
7-HOUR TIME DIFFERENCE (It's summertime! Yay!)
I bought sooo many books. I can't wait to read them all! (In French & English)
BUT COMING BACK HOME, I GOT SICK AS A DOG. I FELT LIKE DEATH WARMED OVER FOR A WHILE.
I SURE WISH I WERE HARDIER!
You could hear concerts going on here and there...
EVERYONE THERE LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE HAVING THE GREATEST TIME. I HAD A BLAST, TOO.
I WAS THERE FOR PARIS' JAPAN EXPO.
Thank you so much to everyone who came to my autograph session!!!
SPECIAL THANKS
• Assistants • MARE-san Shibainu-san
• My Family •
• AND YOU!! •
NEXT UP IS VOLUME 5. I'LL BE WAITING TO SEE YOU ALL THERE.
UNTIL THEN!
BLAT!
I'm not so much writing this as taking dictation from the characters in my head...
I REALLY HOPE THEY'LL TELL ME SOON WHERE IT'S GOING NEXT.
SO, ELIAS AND CHISE'S RELATIONSHIP DEEPENED A BIT IN VOLUME 4.
SNIF SNIF SNIF

A fae begs for help,
but what can a young girl do
to save the fairy's lover...?

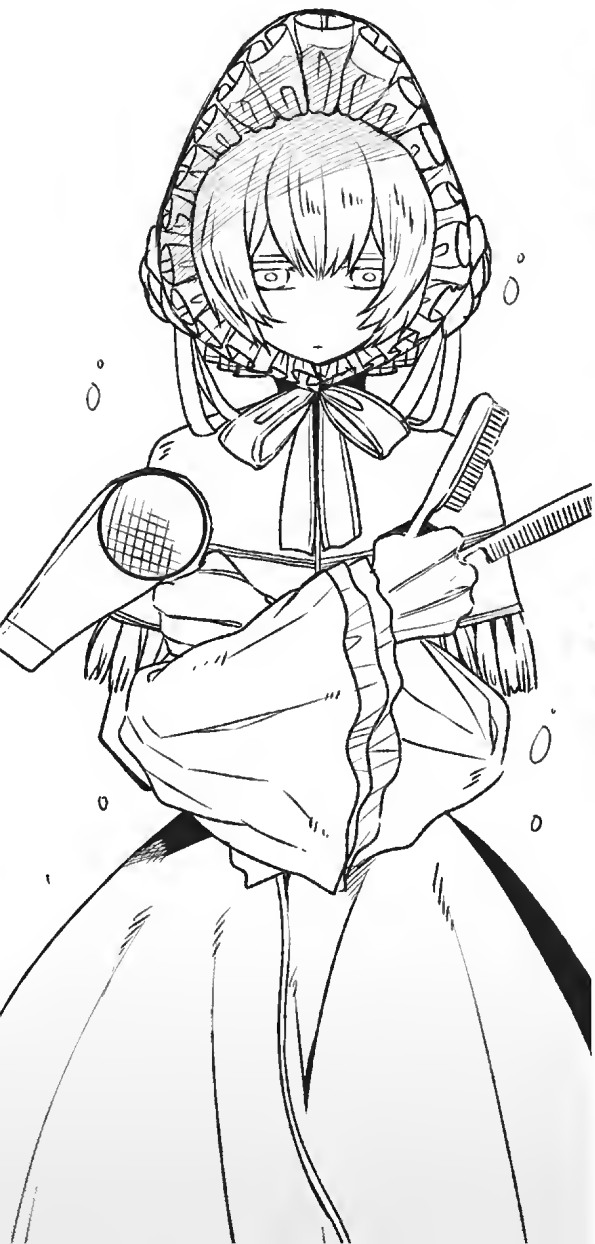
Thanks to her time living with Elias,
Chise has finally begun to move past the fear
and loneliness she struggled with in her past.
And thanks to Chise, Elias has finally
learned to put a name to one of his emotions,
and the world seems more beautiful to him.

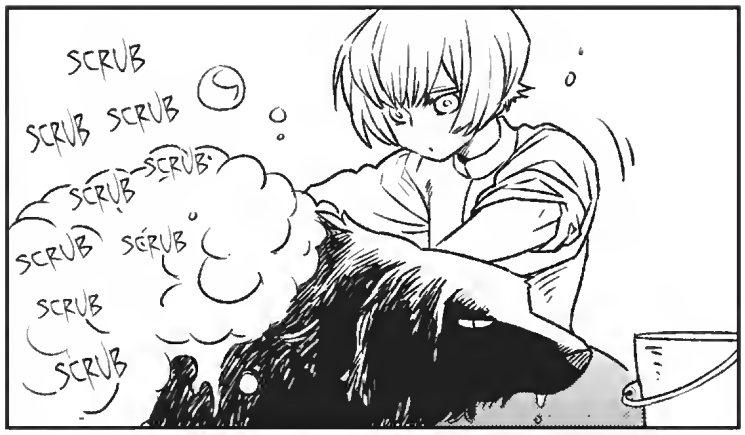
But one day a leannán sídhe comes
to Chise begging for help.
What--if anything--can Chise do...?

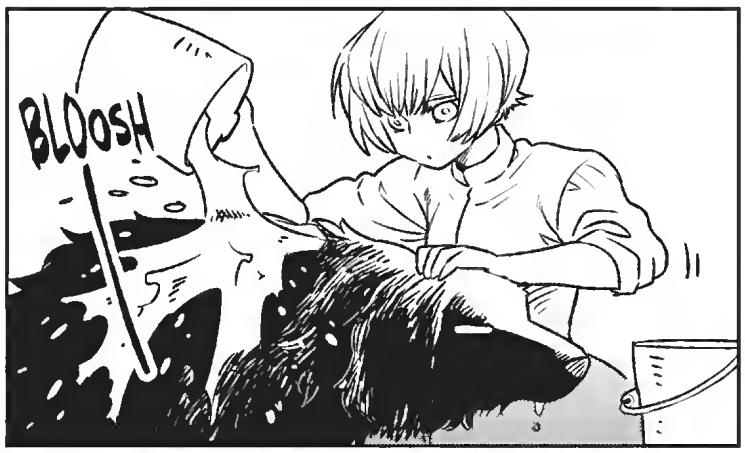
The Ancient Magus' Bride Volume 5
Coming Soon!



Silky's Diary

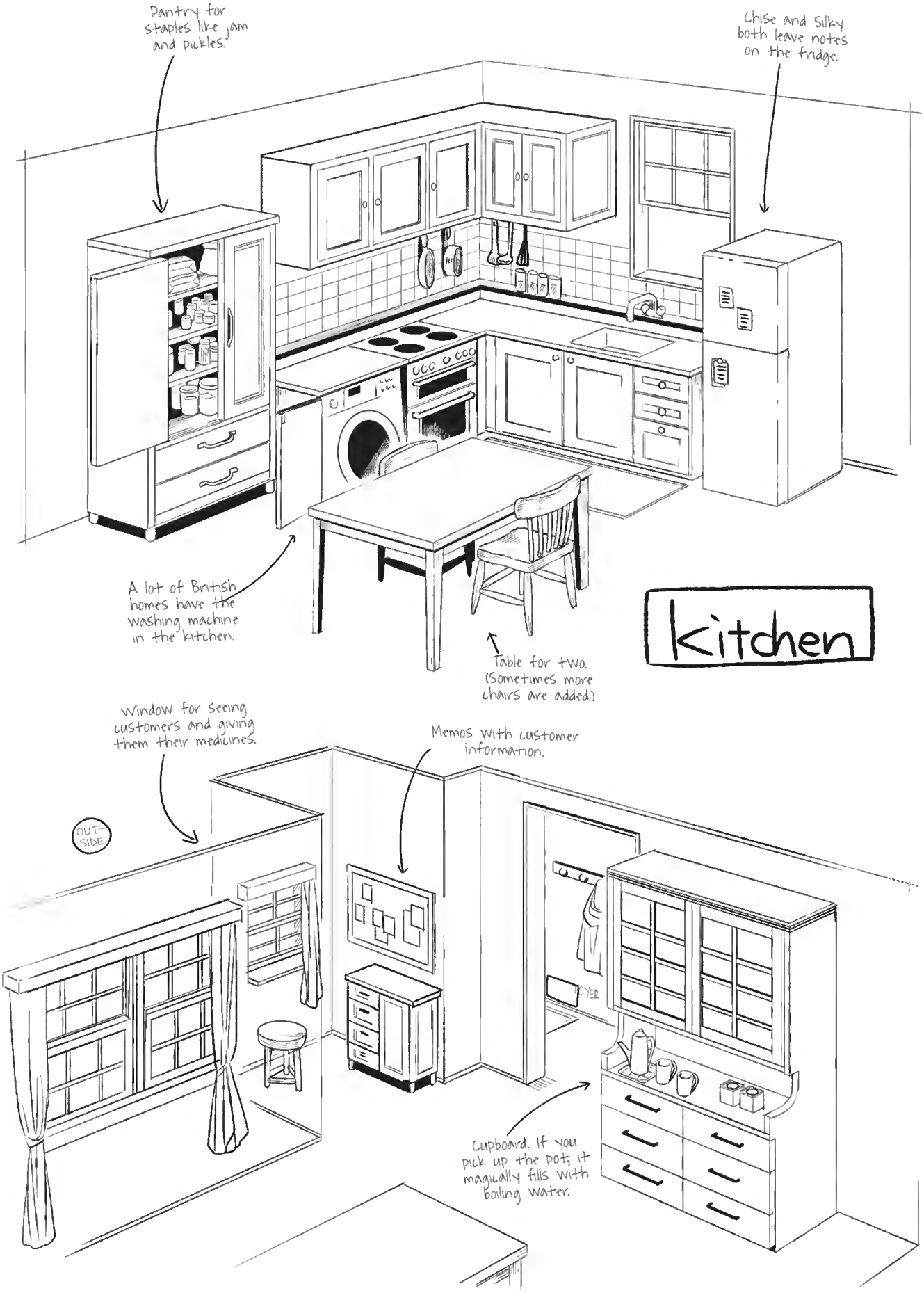











Pantry for staples like jam and pickles.
Chise and Silky both leave notes on the fridge.
A lot of British homes have the washing machine in the kitchen.
Table for two. (Sometimes more chairs are added.)
kitchen
Window for seeing customers and giving them their medicines.
Memos with customer information.
OUT-SIDE
Cupboard. If you pick up the pot, it magically fills with boiling water.

SEVEN SEAS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

The Ancient Magus' Bride VOLUME 4

story and art by **KORE YAMAZAKI**

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THE ANCIENT MAGUS' BRIDE VOL. 4
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Originally published in Japan in 2015 by MAG Garden Corporation, Tokyo.
English translation rights arranged through TOHAN CORPORATION, Tokyo.

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ISBN: 978-1-626922-55-6

Printed in Canada

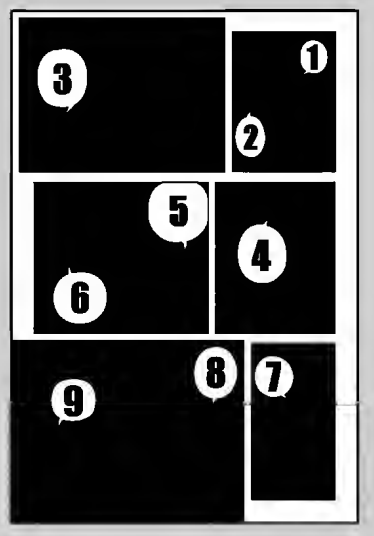
First Printing: April 2016

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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READING DIRECTIONS

This book reads from ***right to left***, Japanese style. If this is your first time reading manga, you start reading from the top right panel on each page and take it from there. If you get lost, just follow the numbered diagram here. It may seem backwards at first, but you'll get the hang of it! Have fun!!



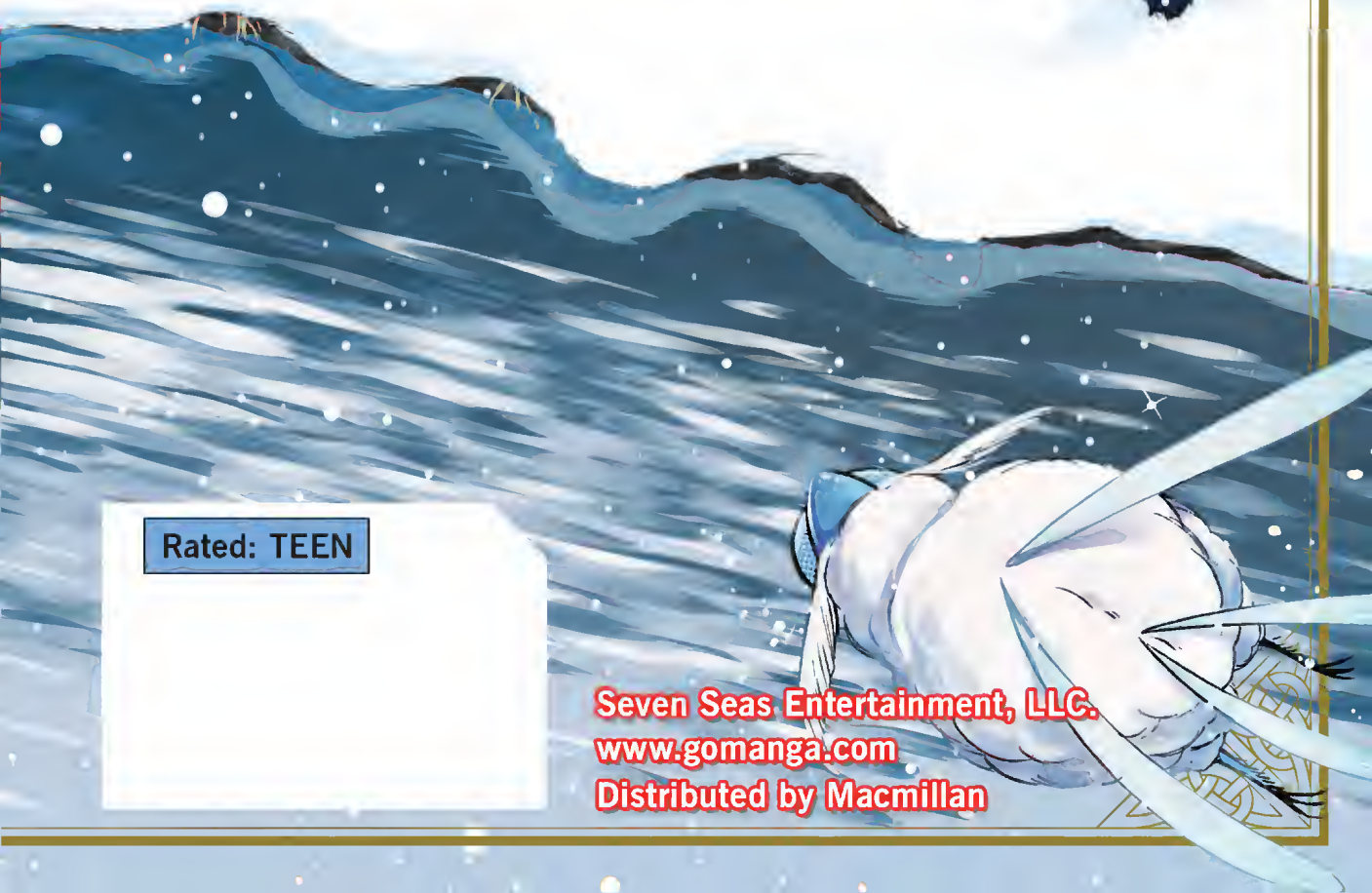
"I am not alone."

Chise has been summoned to the Dragon Aerie to begin crafting her very own wand, but her journey has more to offer than she had anticipated: magical wonders, enlightening visions, and perhaps most importantly, insight into Elias' past and the secrets he has been reluctant to reveal about himself.

Yet while Chise finds some answers about the inhuman mage's history, mysterious beings are displaying an unexpected interest in Chise herself.







Rated: TEEN

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